Media Violence and Education: A Study of Youth Audiences and the Horror Genre

by

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Abstract

This thesis considers the implications of recent work in Cultural Studies for the teaching of contemporary popular culture. By taking horror films as its departure point, it addresses public debates and 'moral panics' about 'violent' genres, particularly recent proposals that education may act as an adjunct to centralised control and regulation of the media.

The methodology used was empirical 'action research' into teaching of the horror genre within Media Studies A-Level courses. The thesis presents the findings of four case studies carried out in two schools with male and female students aged 16-17 years, of contrasting class and ethnic background. Data, including interviews, transcripts of classroom exchanges and students' videos and writing, is interpreted using discourse analysis, psychoanalytic approaches, and postmodern perspectives on researcher reflexivity.

It considers youth audiences' existing strategies for managing their consumption of the mass media. It questions how teachers and students relate to 'cultural value' in contemporary society, and the role of media 'theory' and media production in enhancing learning and understanding. It argues for displacing the privilege granted within media education (and some radical, critical and feminist pedagogies) to dominant modernist discourses which valorise rational, systematised epistemologies, critical autonomy and established value hierarchies. It suggests how 'subjugated' knowledges implicit within practical media production, story-telling or descriptive writing, jokes and even 'mistakes' challenge assumptions about media 'effects' and can be put to work within 'pedagogies of everyday life'. It concludes that a more acute analysis of the intersubjective, relational, unconscious, desiring and affective dimensions of learning and teaching is necessary to understand classroom life and to promote socially just educational practices.

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Introduction

> *There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks and perceive differently than one sees is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.*
> Michel Foucault [1]

This thesis considers the implications of recent work in Cultural Studies for the teaching of contemporary popular culture in schools. It aims to displace dominant discourses (or 'moral paradigms') of media education, which valorise rational, explicit, systematised knowledge, critical autonomy and established value hierarchies, with what it calls an 'ethical' paradigm that acknowledges the intersubjective, relational, unconscious and affective dimensions of learning and teaching. It considers how everyday, 'subjugated' knowledges implicit within practical media production, narrative or descriptive writing, the jocular and even the apparently 'wrong' can be put to work pedagogically. By taking horror films as its departure point, it addresses public debates about 'violent' genres, particularly recent proposals that media education with audiences can act as an adjunct to centralised media regulation and control. Although its major evidence comes from empirical work in Media Studies A-Level classrooms in which I was an observer, in this introduction I offer a partial, narrative account of the beginnings and progress of my project. It illustrates the need to rethink media education, and, by exploring the multi-layered relation between the research, my own subjectivity and the terms within which I could make sense of both, how public discourses and private resistances shape what we are able to know.

The precedent for my research was an 'extension studies' (extra-curricular) option that I first offered in Autumn 1993 in the Sussex sixth form college where I was working. I nominated horror films as a topic out of a vague sense that it would be popular, and that the likely preponderance of boys in the group would allow me to 'do something feminist' around masculinity and the media. I was taken aback by its success. It often attracted as many as thirty or forty students, and assumed a kind of a ritual status for a number of them, mainly heavy metal fans in leather jackets, who would turn up early to grab the front row seats. The atmosphere was chaotic, as students crowded into the classroom, drowned out

[1] (Quoted in Miller 1994: 36).

my attempts to speak, ignored my calls for discipline and subjected not only my teaching but also me myself to fierce critical scrutiny. ('Well, look at the way you dress!' they declared scornfully when I complained about the difficulty of obtaining banned videos).

My first thoughts were that I had stumbled across a pre-existent and thriving horror fan culture of whose existence I had been hitherto unaware. Accordingly the initial research questions I formulated were ethnographic in nature. I wanted to explore who was attracted to this subculture, the forms it took, and what made horror films so popular and pleasurable. I took some steps down this route, by collecting letters from horror fans and making a short video with some students. However, I kept coming back to questions related to teaching, particularly because of the contrast between the horror course and my formal A-Level classes. I had been attracted to media education both because it seemed to be an institutional practice that would nonetheless relate to students' informal interests and because of the theoretical perspectives it espoused. The post-structuralist and feminist theory I had encountered as an undergraduate had transformed my understanding of the world, and I was eager to reproduce such experiences in my students. My immediate background before entering teacher training was as a campaigner on development issues, where I had become disillusioned with the struggle to attract interest in my worthy dayschools exposing the activities of multinationals and the threat of globalisation. Teaching seemed to offer a tantalising combination of activism and intellect, along with a captive audience; I could change students if not society, and without compromising my politics. Len Masterman's *Teaching the Media* – the main textbook on which I drew – provided a rationale for the urgency and significance of Media Studies as a 'life and death' matter rather than just another discipline (Masterman 1985: 6), in which I could remain merely a 'collaborator' and a 'senior colleague', even as I liberated my students from 'innocent' consumption of dominant meanings (ibid.: 6, and Masterman 1980: 28). It held out to me a glittering image of power, whilst denying that I would have to exercise it.

I had therefore embarked on A-Level teaching full of optimism. Yet as others before me found, it wasn't working (Buckingham 1990; Richards 1986; Richards 1992; Turnbull 1998). Students were bored and unmoved by my choice of

subject matter - the usual suspects, like race and gender representations, positive images and the news. Our relationships were often marked by sullen resentment on their part rather than the harmonious equality I had hoped for. They read my teaching practices as censure of their tastes, and the low grades I gave them for their essays as a dogmatic dismissal of their perspectives. Yet I felt that I didn't have any alternative within the educational approaches available to me. Ideological analysis of topics such as the news seemed to be a moral duty if I were to equip students to participate as citizens in the world around them. My negative response to their work rested on a definition of what could count as evidence of understanding and learning. Students who argued, for instance, that media portrayals of women simply reflected their innate differences from men, had to be marked down for failing to realise the constructed nature of representations.

However, with horror films I felt I was at last addressing students in terms of something that mattered to them. Even my lack of control felt like a welcome change from the authoritarianism I was modelling in other classes, against my conscious intentions. If my A-Level teaching offered few points of connection to students' lives outside college, the horror course seemed to be a riot of the repressed, literalised by the chaos that was left behind at the end of each lesson. A trail of sweet and crisp wrappers all over the floor; overturned and broken chairs; sexual cartoons and satanic symbols scribbled on the whiteboard. It should have offered an ideal opportunity to encourage students to reflect on their informal media experiences, but my attempts to do so often foundered on the very contradictions that made the course so fascinating. Both the students and I were thrilled by the subversive charge that making an excluded cultural form visible held in the context of the elite, achievement-oriented, Christian ethos of the college. Yet to take horror seriously as an object of study would betray the pleasures it offered, which lay in its illegitimacy and opposition to academic norms. They therefore consistently refused my attempts to impose formal teaching strategies, such as worksheets and even 'discussion', in which I spoke to them as a teacher, rather than as a fellow fan. Since it was a voluntary course they had some grounds for doing so, but I myself was becoming increasingly unsure of the aims and value of the established practices on which I drew.

For instance, I tried to teach the conventions of horror films, but the students knew the formulae, could recite them readily, and weren't being enlightened by going over them. I also based the course around the genre categories identified in Carol Clover's *Men Women and Chainsaws* (1992), such as the slasher and the occult. But the students made different distinctions: 'art' versus 'gore' horror, or 'basic' versus 'psychological' – terms which were unfamiliar to me and the boundaries of which were almost impossible to establish. I had to rethink my belief in interpretation and critique as a means to enable students to gain insights, not just into textual meaning, but into themselves as audiences. This did not seem problematic when I taught soap opera, for example, and discussed the potentially positive functions of its strong female characters for women audiences. However, the theoretical perspectives on which I drew as a means to deconstruct both the horror texts and masculinity (suggesting that they 'identified' with the victims) sounded frankly embarrassing in the classroom. The problem was not that raised by other educators such as Williamson (1981/2), of a silenced knowledge that refuses the risk of teacher or peer disapproval in the classroom context; students were prepared to articulate their views, but I wasn't relating to them. Even when I let students choose the films we watched, I found that they would often clamour for one they had seen and liked before, yet at the end of the screening denounce it as 'crap'. What they valued about the films did not derive from what each offered individually, but from other levels that I failed to recognise. It is a mark of my textual obsession that I never thought to engage them in a discussion of the meaning of the course itself, or to question the links between horror and other media forms such as heavy metal.

Such challenges were highlighted by their responses to an evaluation form I issued at the end of the first term. *Q: 'what were your expectations when you chose this option?' A: 'To see lots of blood and people being maimed and screaming in agony as they die painfull', 'watch people getting hurt', 'lots of blood and limb extracting', 'To see dead people, people getting killed, people getting hurt shot, stabed, eaten, crucifyed. Raped shagged'. Q: 'What has been the least enjoyable part of the course so far?' – A: 'Shit discussions and no blood', 'the bit where Sarah goes on befor the film', 'waffalling on at the start of films', 'her blathering on about the film giving her personal opinion which is always along the lines of sex', 'the bit where we analyse the film'. Q: 'What could be*

done to improve this course?' – A: 'More tits, more gore, more internal organs up the wall', 'more women being cut up', 'more tits being cut up'.

Initially, I wanted to ignore those comments, since they seemed to confirm my pedagogic failures. Even so, their hyperbole made me doubt that they expressed what they 'really' thought about women (or about me). Nor were they a spontaneous outpouring of raw emotion; they demonstrated a mocking awareness, phrased almost poetically, of the impact of flaunting taboos, introducing 'the body', violence and perversity into classroom discourse. They were more appropriately seen as a 'contextualised dialogue' (Edwards and Mercer 1987) produced for a specific purpose and marked by an astute awareness both of myself as interlocutor and, as I consoled myself much later, of what I had in fact been trying to convey. However, they clearly required a response. Launching an attack on them for their sexism might jeopardise our already fragile relationship. Pedagogical strategies aimed at 'changing their attitudes' would target the comments themselves, not their function. Nor would it help to encourage an 'atmosphere of trust' in which they would 'problematise' their views in a 'mature and serious' debate (Masterman 1985: 240). In giving them the questionnaire, I had already invited them to respond as thoughtful, rational 'consumers' of the educational product that I was providing, and it was precisely this that they were rejecting with relish.

I opted for reading them out, straight-faced, at the start of the next term's course, during a discussion of moral panics about horror audiences. The students (a mixture of previous and first-time attenders) reacted with roars of laughter, but also with a disowning embarrassment. Several students asked if they had written particular comments, seeming both eager to find out and surprised at the same time, as though they genuinely did not know. It felt like a moment of breakthrough, since it was the first time they were really curious about anything I had said. However, I lacked a means to situate and develop it. Much later, I read Elizabeth Ellsworth's argument for pedagogies that 'reflect back a difference that makes a difference' (1997), an expression which resonated with what I had done. For once, I hadn't required them to be like me, to adopt a feminist or academic voice, but had taken and repeated their own words. The denaturalising effect this seemed to have (heightened by the incongruity of my

speaking them as a woman) opened a gap between the selves who produced them, and who listened to them but did not necessarily recognise themselves within them. In the process, I thought, they might have been able to reflect on their own performance of masculinity, its functions in particular contexts, even take responsibility for it to a certain extent. They may have learnt something *from* horror, rather than *about* horror, and more effectively because it was achieved through laughter rather than antagonism. I pursue this in my arguments about horror as a 'pedagogic' genre. Consequently, I also wondered about the content of their responses. They seemed to be telling me something important; perhaps, that analysing meaning is opposed to the sensuous pleasures of the body that horror provides. They have had implications for my advocacy of pedagogical strategies, such as practical production, that open up space for reflection, on students' own terms, rather than insisting that students must 'know' what teachers have decided they should, or become who we want them to be.

As this example suggests, much of my research has been an ongoing dialogue about those experiences and the adequacy of institutionalised Media Studies approaches to deal with them, to which I have returned again and again. However, the process evoked for me another on which I was simultaneously engaged in psychotherapy. There too I revisited moments, events, dreams, that had stayed memorable because the meaning I consciously ascribed to them no longer allowed me to live in peace with myself, and for which I needed to find new, more complex, narrative contexts. It was clear that what horror films meant to me was intimately imbricated in this process. My research changed as contemporary discursive contexts made new ways of analysing horror and its audiences available; but my capacity to integrate them into my research, and even what I could be cognisant of in the data I was collecting, existed in a complex tension with personal or psychic change. I trace these strands here for a number of reasons. Horror's degraded cultural status raises questions about academics' motivations in taking it or its audiences as objects of critical scrutiny; the extent to which, for example, they may be rejecting the values of their own elite education to identify with what they perceive as an oppositional subculture (Gripsrud 1989; Sconce 1995). Arguably, research into horror requires some account of our personal viewing histories, given its often gruesome, violent and morbid content, the dialectic of pleasure and fear, seeing and not-seeing (and

our desire for both) engaged by the viewing process, and the widespread public disquiet that surrounds it. Moreover, psychoanalysis has long been an accepted framework for understanding horror's meaning. I also want to pursue (and demonstrate) Shoshana Felman's psychoanalytic argument, that ignorance is the product of active refusal, rather than cognitive or intellectual failure (1997 (1982)). What we do not know is driven by a passionate need not to know it - and conversely, I would add, what we do learn may also be motivated by need. Her view radically subverts the rationalist pedagogies I discuss in Chapter One.

I became aware that aspects of my own adolescent self were implicated in the research from my consistent references to the students I was observing as being eighteen years old, when in fact they were sixteen or seventeen. In 1982, when I was eighteen, both my parents died (my mother, over six months, of cancer; my father, abruptly, three months before her, in a manner which seemed even then like a choice to give up on life and the demands of the situation). Unsurprisingly, these events have remained for me a key point of reference, which I have struggled to redefine and reinterpret. Writing at this point in my life, I would highlight two enduring legacies that are relevant to my argument here. The first was an oscillation between an overwhelming sense of powerlessness and a terror of my own power in that I held myself obscurely responsible for causing this catastrophe. The second was a perception of myself as marginal, as I dealt with grief at a future-oriented time of life normatively defined as one of experimentation free from consequences. I may have already experienced this liminality, within my own family and within a competitive academic system in which my background made me consistently insecure about the cultural capital I possessed. I handled these legacies together through my involvement in forms of politics - socialist, feminist and dyke - in which I both figured as a minority outsider, oppressed by the powerful institutions of capitalism, patriarchy and heterosexuality, and yet found a place. In teaching too, I relished my choice of a profession that lacked status, recognition or material rewards.

Even before my parents' deaths, I had found horror films upsetting, but the anxiety and disgust they provoked in me intensified afterwards. The women's movement in the 1980s (a period in which feminism and horror fandom were oxymoronic, as others have noted (Pinedo 1997)) gave me a rationale for my

rejection. It told me that they were misogynist, a glorification of male violence against women and thus potentially dangerous (for women, since they would teach us our place in the patriarchal order, and for men, who would learn to revel in their own power). Whilst feminist cultural criticism provided exciting insights and raised genuine concerns about the ideological effects of media material, it may have served a particular function for me. My dislike of violence was not an indication of my freedom from 'desensitisation', as many have claimed (e.g. Van der Voort 1986), but far more complex. If horror films signified male aggression and cruelty, by not watching them I could avoid confronting my ambivalent relationship with my authoritarian father and abusive brother. In denouncing them, I could also channel some of my feelings of rage towards the parents who abandoned me.

If therapy was an attempt to address such issues privately, it was (my perception of) cultural shifts that enabled me to relate them to horror films. Carol Clover's work was a revelation to me, particularly her perspective on masculinity as passive and victim-identified rather than universally sadistic. In an important way, it 'allowed' me to start watching horror films as a feminist. (It has also led me to be wary of the dismissive attitudes of some empirical researchers to theory, as I discuss in Chapter Two). Her work is most appropriately read as a contribution to the debate about the gendered cinematic gaze that Laura Mulvey had initiated in 1975 (Mulvey 1989). However, basing her theory of spectatorship around horror effectively required her to insist that its 'majority audience' is male – which she does on the basis of sketchy evidence, although it is a common assumption. For a long time I accepted this framework. I could argue that I had empirical evidence of my own for doing so (the predominance of men on the horror course). What I did not acknowledge was the extent to which a focus on male masochism may have made masculinity – and men - more acceptable to me. Although I often found my male horror students aggressive and intimidating, many were unpopular with other teachers, academic 'failures' retaking GCSEs rather than progressing to A-Level, whom I consistently thought of as more 'working class' than their peers. I therefore perceived them as marginal, even vulnerable, and identified with them on this basis. However, if masculinity was less potent and oppressive than I had thought, then I was less helpless in relation to it, could exert power of my own in turn. My attempts to

persuade my students that they were hopeless masochists rather than the fearless 'gore hounds' they claimed to be, may have been part of this, a power game between us in the classroom rather than the presentation of an abstract truth. Openly addressing this relation between knowledge and power (and the unexpressed anger underlying it) might, however, have been too threatening at this stage of my research and life.

As many critics have observed, whilst Clover drew attention to aspects of the films which were easily recuperable for a feminist reading – the 'final girl' who fights the monster, for instance - she offers little purchase in understanding women's relationship to horror. One question concerns whether and to what extent, if male audiences are identifying with victims, female audiences might be taking pleasure in the aggression and power of the killers. It might be hard to formulate for social and cultural rather than intellectual reasons, since as Lynda Hart notes, fictionalised portrayals of violent women are always shadowed by the image of the lesbian (Hart 1994). Thus it was relevant that it was 'bad girl' feminism and queer theory in the early 1990s that rejected visions of women as inherently nurturing and put the question of fantasy and of powerful women on the agenda. In my own life, whilst straight feminist friends ritualistically expressed distaste for my developing identity as a 'horror fan', queer friends were able to recognise what it might mean for me, even before I saw it myself. A birthday gift from this time that I treasure was a large metal chopping knife, of the sort so often held flashing aloft in horror films, wrapped in cotton wool and placed in a box decorated with angels and cupids against a silver background. It was a neat joke on the threat that might be contained within a 'soft' feminine exterior (and the perfect gift from a butch to a femme). Imagining violence through a publicly available form such as horror was a step towards acknowledging it in myself [2].

My personal investments may have been reflected in the moral agenda that underpinned my early research perspectives. In an article about horror teaching

[2] The concept of 'violence' is stable to the extent that we can function successfully within it, yet is capable of a wide range of interpretation. How and where we use it reveals our assumptions and values. I keep the term deliberately empty and undecideable (a strategy also advocated by Bennett in relation to 'popular culture' (Bennett 1986: 16)). I thereby allow it to stand in for a range of feelings, actions, fantasies and desires that I would argue are the product and consequence not only of social inequalities, but also of inner contradictions and impulses that have no direct relation to external reality. I return to it in Chapter Six and offer a different perspective on why it continues to be such an ongoing concern in public debates.

first published in 1995, I addressed an imagined audience of reluctant teachers and pointed to horror's potential for exploring key questions in media education (Bragg 1996). Despite my declared interest in the cognitive development of students, though, I implicitly believed that the process of encountering horror texts might help them explore and accept their own repressed, perverse emotions. Such an approach has political importance in the context of public debates that see the genre only as corrupting for its audiences and denies it a constructive role in identity formation. Nor is it unique; other critics have frequently focused on identifying the inherent 'progressive potential' of single texts or genres. (Yvonne Tasker has commented shrewdly on the wish-fulfilment that leads critics to describe soap opera narratives, for instance, in terms of their 'refusal' to end, as though a language of resistance will conjure it into being in their audiences (Tasker 1991)). Yet in my case at least it was clearly driven by what I most wanted to believe. I found in this period of my research informants who gave me the data I was looking for. One of these was Alan (see Chapter Three), whose intense emotional relationship with horror films - repeatedly watching *American Werewolf in London* (1981), for example - mirrored my own. My view was 'confirmed' at a conference on psychoanalysis and horror, where a contributor linked this film in particular to 'messages' about the adolescent body (Campbell 1995).

As I learnt to negotiate different aspects of my own identity, however, I became able to admit to consciousness evidence that I had previously ignored because it did not fit – that, in Felman's terms, I needed not to know. Thus, it seems that I began by 'needing to know' that horror films were popular because they spoke directly to the experience of socially excluded adolescent males who had an uneasy relationship to masculinity. Yet my data did not in fact show this. When visiting students' houses during the production of our video, and later in my full-time research, it was clear not only that there was a broad cross-class interest in horror, but also that it held a fascination for girls, which they articulated in interviews but not necessarily in the classroom. Further, a change in the college timetable had altered the nature of my course. Instead of taking place in the middle of the morning, when students had to wait around for afternoon lessons, it was timetabled after lunch when they could otherwise go home; rather than being in a central location, it took place in a remote teaching hut. Faced with a

choice of activities, and the relative invisibility of attendance, student numbers dropped dramatically. The course proved to be not so much a vessel that 'captured' an identifiable horror fan subculture 'out there', but an occasion for its construction at a particular juncture and in a particular space. In attempting to account for these findings I began to frame horror viewing as a contextualised discursive practice. Within these terms, I could question the social functions of public identification as a member of the horror audience, rather than the psychic satisfaction provided by individual films; why girls might be reluctant to express their interest so spectacularly, rather than 'why horror appeals more to men than women'.

As my research developed I also realised that horror teaching had not been pioneered by me, but was going on already within both English and Media Studies curricula. I became more interested in critically exploring an existing practice, and linking it to social policy arguments that media education should deliver self-regulation by audiences. In so doing, I had to rethink strategies of textual analysis which ask what texts mean, as if meaning exists outside the contexts, practices and functions of everyday life. Teaching does not import a meaning from elsewhere, that it then holds up for scrutiny. Instead it is a performance that itself constructs that meaning, momentarily and provisionally, and in relation to the specific power struggles and investments of its location. Horror is constructed through available discourses, of which the notion of horror as a confrontation with your 'dark side' is just one; I explored how they were drawn on, how students represented their knowledge and interests, in different contexts such as interviews and lessons. Although I continue to hold that horror is a useful 'tool to think with', it serves a range of purposes. I began to consider pedagogies more capable of encompassing the affective, bodily power of the popular than ideological decoding had proved able to do (Grossberg 1986). Perhaps with most difficulty, I challenged my own assumption that teachers should or could make students better people, as if there are easy solutions to questions of identity, or as if teaching can offer transcendence. In seeing teaching as a more prosaic activity, I recognised my own implication in the drive for mastery offered by radical pedagogies; but I also became more alive to its ethical and relational rather than moral dimension.

One might argue that this shift from advocacy to problematisation is a history of Media Studies in miniature, dependent on a changing context in which it had become a more established feature of school education. The kinds of postmodern perspectives I am referring to also mark me as the product of an era in which postmodernism itself has turned from 'nihilistic posture to more promising possibilities' (Gergen 1994). But making these shifts for myself may have reflected a growing sense of connection to the world around me, of embeddedness in the ongoing interaction of living, rather than the isolation I had experienced previously.

My selection of data also follows a pattern of projection and identification. In trying to understand why I worked so hard to validate Lauren's interest in serial killers, or Richard's excessive violence (Chapter Six), I realised that I was making sense of myself (Denzin 1998: 319). The analysis thus represents a 'discovery of the self through the detour of the other' (Hunt 1989: 42). Such projection may seem undesirable, yet it should be acknowledged and worked with rather than ignored. Many feminist critics have analysed male researchers' collusion with their subjects that leads them to ignore their private and domestic lives in order to produce them only as the public, resistant selves that both wish to be (McRobbie 1991). By being more explicit about these processes I hope that the subjects that emerge here are more than just displaced representations of myself, although they are always also that.

In many ways, my research is a work of mourning (Hunt 1989: 35). In one sense, it has been part of my grieving for my parents. But it is also a mourning for the certainties and ideals with which I began teaching, and in particular, the enticing fantasy of the teacher who has authority without hierarchy or power. Undoubtedly these continue to fascinate (Gore 1991: 51). In arguing that we must give them up, I am not offering a counsel of despair or resignation. I have sought a way of writing about pedagogy that is less subject to the idealising fictions of earlier 'teachers' manifestos' (Buckingham 1986: 81), acknowledges the messy dynamics of that which cannot be directly observed or quantified, yet is still critically engaged. In accepting the achievements of the everyday and mundane, we may also learn to embrace complexity and ambivalence. Research and teaching, like the other practices of living and loving, are a struggle to

connect – in which we miss more often than not, perhaps, but can find some meaning and joy.

Chapter One - Making the case for media education

> *If I know the truth and you are ignorant, to make you change your thoughts and ways is my moral duty.*
>
> *Spinoza*

Media education has expanded rapidly in recent years. Its status has been enhanced by its establishment as an area within the National Curriculum and as a specialised subject at upper secondary, further and tertiary levels. Professional associations and journals, conferences, websites, accredited training courses, a publishing industry of textbooks and to a limited extent, of research, have grown up around it.

However, it continues to be ridiculed in the press and by politicians, as a non-subject, teaching neither a firm body of knowledge nor useful vocational skills. These claims of course have specific functions for those making them and offer caricatures far removed from actual practice. However, others within the media education field have also expressed concerns about the nature of the learning opportunities it offers (Bazalgette 1998). Whilst it has proved advantageous to institutions as a means of attracting students in a competitive educational marketplace, many have suggested that it is still not seen as a rigorous academic subject, but one suited to 'less able' students (e.g. Morgan 1996: 20).

In this chapter I will analyse some texts that attempt to define its identity and establish its credibility. Two are teaching projects about media violence. The first originated in the Netherlands and was described in an article entitled 'Teaching Children to Evaluate Television Violence Critically: the Impact of a Dutch Schools Television Project' (Vooijs and Van der Voort 1993a; see also Vooijs and Van der Voort 1993b). A modified form is available in Britain as part of a larger pack called *Teaching Television in the Primary School* (Phillips n.d.). I will refer to it as the *Critical Viewing* or the 'Dutch' project. The second is an American project, *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media*, produced by the Center for Media Literacy (CML) (1995)[1]. Thirdly, Len Masterman's textbook *Teaching the Media* (1985); and finally, a recent report published by the

[1] 'Media literacy' is the term more commonly used in the US than 'media education'.

British Film Institute (BFI), *Making Movies Matter* (Film Education Working Group 1999).

Each speaks from very different institutions and research traditions, historical moments, political perspectives, for different purposes and audiences. The Dutch project evolved from Professor van der Voort's earlier work on children and media violence (1986), and both authors are psychologists based at the Centre for Child and Media Studies at Leiden University. In brief, it consisted of a series of six 20-minute television programmes aimed at 10 - 12 year olds for use in schools, accompanied by student worksheets and teachers' notes. The CML (formerly the Center for Media and Values) has its roots in the Catholic Church rather than higher education institutions. However, two issues of its magazine, *Media and Values*, similarly locate the theoretical underpinnings of the project in psychological research. *Beyond Blame* consists of five programmes aimed at different ages and contexts (the first is for a 'Town Hall' public meeting, the last for 'Parents and Caregivers'), each containing teacher's notes, handouts and videos for a set of eight lessons. It addresses activists, community and religious groups rather than teachers alone.

They are of interest firstly because new technologies make centralised control of the media increasingly unfeasible. Whilst blocking mechanisms such as the V-chip continue to promise that it can still be achieved, the projects' demand for educational interventions to deliver self-regulation by audiences may represent a new phase in arguments about media violence. We might compare, for instance, the outcome of Belson's work on youth audiences in the 1970s with that of Greg Philo of Glasgow University's Media Group on fans of the film *Pulp Fiction* (1994) in the 1990s (1978; 1997). Both authors express concern about media effects. On the basis of research with ten 12 year-olds, Dr. Philo is quoted in a front-page article of the *Times Educational Supplement* as saying: 'It seemed very unlikely that violent films would have no influence. The children saw the killers as cool and exciting, while victims were uncool. One child said he thought it "would be cool to blow someone away"'. However, where Belson's report concluded by demanding an immediate reduction in the levels of violence in particular programmes, Philo's proposal is 'anti-violence education'. The article notes that he has discussed this with the Scottish Office and the National Society

for the Protection of Children, and has been contacted by the government's junior education minister about his work (Ghouri 1997). Similarly, both the projects to be discussed here have gained support from educational and media institutions and policy makers concerned with media regulation. *Critical Viewing* was backed by the Dutch Schools TV Corporation and shown in 3,500 or a third of all primary schools in the Netherlands. In Britain, the Devon Education Authority funded its distribution free to local schools and James Ferman, as Director of the British Board of Film Classification, hailed it as a 'wonderful introduction to issues about violence and what it means' (Bragg and Grahame 1997). Meanwhile, according to the CML, the *Beyond Blame* pack has sold some 1,500 copies at $250 dollars each, suggesting total sales of $375,000 in an American context where there is as yet no funding 'strand' for media education in the public school system. The work of van der Voort and the CML has been cited positively, along with that of Masterman and the BFI, in a recent report on 'Violence and the Viewer' (Joint Working Party on Violence on Television 1998). Since horror films are so often classified as 'violent' the projects also represent one possible approach to teaching such texts.

Len Masterman is a key figure in the development of British media education; *Teaching the Media* could well be described as constituting its 'dominant discourse'. According to a recent article, it has sold more than 40,000 copies and his work has been translated into eight languages, 'shaping the agenda of teachers around the world' (Watling 1997: 341). Masterman addresses teachers rather than evaluators, parents or campaigners, and includes reference to classroom exercises from his own teaching (see also Masterman 1980), offering not a programme of lessons ready-packaged for delivery, but a set of general principles for teaching across the media. He too draws on theory emanating from higher education institutions, but from a wider range of disciplines (sociology, political theory, linguistics, semiotics, film theory). Although his work has been the subject of extensive critique in Britain by writers such as David Buckingham (e.g.1986), radical and feminist pedagogues such as Henry Giroux (e.g. 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; 1997), Peter McLaren (1995) and Bronwyn Davies (1993) continue to advocate similar theoretical perspectives and pedagogical approaches. I will refer to this work where it is relevant to my arguments.

In the following three sections I will explore some of the similarities in the logic and rhetoric of the arguments they employ and in what they imply about the nature of the media and young people's relationship to them. In analysing the teaching they propose, I do not assess whether or not it is likely to be 'effective', an approach that would focus narrowly on testable outcomes. Drawing on Ellsworth's (1997) work on 'mode of address' in pedagogy, I am concerned rather with how it addresses students and positions them in relation to knowledge, power and authority. That is, who it thinks they are, who it wants them to be, and what 'ways of reading the world' it constructs for them.

Making Movies Matter is a 94-page document produced by the Film Education Working Group, formed in 1998 at the request of the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Its establishment followed the earlier work of the Film Policy Review Group, a body more specifically concerned with how to secure the competitiveness of the British film industry in the global media marketplace. Its publication was overseen by the British Film Institute, which has been a major force in lobbying for and shaping media education (Bowker 1991) and Film Education, an industry-sponsored body. Its remit was to draw up a strategy specifically for film rather than media education. To do so, it claims that it compiled evidence from over 40,000 interested parties as well as from commissioned research. A rough breakdown of the contributors listed at the end of the report shows an overwhelming dominance of representatives from education. It therefore provides a fascinating insight into the current concerns of educators about young people's media consumption. Yet it also received submissions from many involved in media institutions, at the level of production (creative and administrative personnel), distribution and exhibition (such as cinema managers), along with Arts Boards and local authorities. Its findings address two broad constituencies: 'educational policy-makers' and the 'UK moving image industries'. It therefore emerges from within the bureaucratic institutions of the state and is itself bound into the workings of the economic sphere. I will analyse the Report separately, since its location and audience lead to a more contradictory – and perhaps more promising – account of what media education might become.

Critical Viewing, Beyond Blame and *Teaching the Media*: Shared perspectives

Within these texts, the media are conceived as a homogenous, negative and coercive force. This is explicit in the anti-violence projects, which both claim that media violence poses a real social danger. Vooijs and van der Voort open their article with a list of the 'undesirable consequences of watching television violence'. The CML announces that 'the scientific debate is over', and that there is 'No Doubt About It - Media Violence Affects Behavior'[2]. *Beyond Blame* is suffused with a rhetoric of expertise and scientific validity, underscoring the authority of contributors by giving their academic qualifications and job titles – 'public health advocate', 'professor', 'M.D.' and so on. Both conflate contradictory findings and research perspectives as if they are complementary (Barker has discussed this common tendency 1997). For instance, *Beyond Blame* insists that the media make audiences simultaneously more aggressive (active), 'desensitised' (callous and passive) and fearful of 'becoming a victim' (which suggests a heightened sensitivity). It attributes 'at least' half of the 23,000 murders committed each year in the US to television's influence, on the basis that homicide rates increased with the arrival of TV. This is an absurd argument (the murder statistics correlate equally well with the invention of Velcro, as others have pointed out (Buckingham 1996: 30)), yet it is proclaimed as a 'groundbreaking' study produced by an 'expert' with a PhD.

More generally, however, the media are described in metaphors that suggest they constitute a form of action rather than a cultural expression. *Beyond Blame* authors claim that there we are 'incessantly *bombarded* with the images, sounds and emotions of shootings, bombings and rapes'; that 'not a day goes by that we don't *get a dose of aggression* from the media. And it's getting worse' (my emphasis). Such language legitimates claims for media restriction whilst circumventing First Amendment protections of free speech. CML Director Elizabeth Thoman writes that 'of course' these are 'still important. But so are the thousands of lives being lost every year ... it is not a question of censoring ideas

[2] Academic consensus is, of course, far from being achieved. Many critics have engaged with the weaknesses of effects research, challenging it for its methodology, for the consistency and significance of its results and for its inability to prove causality rather than correlation. (See for instance Barker and Petley 1997; Cumberbatch and Howitt 1989; Freedman 1986; Freedman 1984; Gauntlett 1995; Hirsch 1980; Wober 1978; Wober 1990; Wober and Gunter 1982). Others have

but of changing behaviors that are endangering the health and safety of every citizen'[3]. Moreover, the media are seen as providing a total 'environment' with damaging consequences. According to one writer, recent US congressional investigations defined television violence as part of a larger 'quality of life issue' - a debate about 'What kind of *culture* will give our children the *environment* they need to grow up *healthy and whole*?' (Considine 1995, my emphasis)[4]. The CML argues that media education is important for a 'healthy *planet*' and declares that asking whether watching violence causes someone to become violent is the 'wrong question to ask'. Its alternative is: 'What is the long term impact on our national psyche when millions of children, in their formative years, grow up decade after decade bombarded with very powerful visual and verbal messages demonstrating violence as the preferred way to solve problems and normalizing fear and violence as "the way things are"?' This is disingenuous since the CML does claim that the media directly cause a range of social ills. However, it connects with the preoccupations of a broader spectrum of critics, particularly on the left, with the power of the media to manipulate audiences and propagate dominant ideology by agenda-setting and framing public debate (cf Nava 1997). Media analyst George Gerbner (a contributor to *Beyond Blame*) launched a campaign on media issues in 1996, the 'Cultural Environment Movement' (CEM). He compares industries that pollute the environment with media conglomerates that 'discharge their messages into the mainstream of common consciousness'. Philo denies that children will necessarily become 'copycat killers' as a result of watching *Pulp Fiction*, but argues that 'clearly these films do affect their thoughts and ideas' – for instance, in defining killers as 'cool'. Masterman also claims that the media 'tell us what is important and trivial' (5). He depicts the media as monolithic 'Consciousness Industries', which 'generally speak with the same voice' (30) and whose primary function is to 'engineer' consent for the social and economic relations of capitalism or 'forms of domination and oppression'. He writes that 'it is scarcely a secret that advertising images are produced by big business in order to serve their direct interests' (75) and argues for 'the assessment of any kind of media information in the light of the interests of those who produce it' (123). Media power, in these accounts, is securely possessed

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argued that its conceptual and methodological frameworks are inadequate to understanding the complexity of human subjectivity, and I return to these more general points in Chapter Two.

[3] Of course, regulation of visual material in Britain is also premised on its power to 'deprave and corrupt' or to 'incite crime'.

by institutions, with a singular determining intent behind it. Giroux's conception of Hollywood as a 'teaching machine' offers a pedagogic metaphor for the same position, in which the media impose values and beliefs on audiences (Giroux 1995). The media are constructed as profoundly anti-democratic, rather than a source of alternative political imaginings (cf O'Shea 1996).

Media meanings in these accounts are both stable and efficacious. *Beyond Blame* refers throughout to statistical 'evidence' of children's consumption (or 'logging') of television ('roughly 36,000 hours by the time he or she is 18') and its violence ('some 15,000 murders'). Such figures derive from content analysis, in which researchers predetermine a supposedly objective definition of violence and then quantify its occurrence in a limited sample of television programmes. The method assumes that 'meaning' is determinate and immanent within texts, regardless of narrative contexts and practices of viewing. Cartoons thus emerge as the most violent programmes on television (for critiques see Dorr 1983; Gunter 1985; Winston 1990). *Critical Viewing* is subtler in that it departs from van der Voort's 1986 research on children's own definitions of violence, which showed that they were aware of the fictional nature of cartoons and fantasy genres. It therefore focuses on police and crime series that children considered 'more or less true to life' (Vooijs and Van der Voort 1993a: 140). However, it too holds that they contain unacceptable meanings that will shape children's attitudes, such as the notion that violence is an acceptable way of solving problems. Masterman's summary of David Morley's work on the *Nationwide* audience (1980) stresses that there are 'preferred readings'[5] of a text that can be 'discovered' through ideological analysis using semiotic tools. He remarks that 'it is important to distinguish between "deviant" readings which are based on a full recognition of the dominant meanings encoded within the text and those which are apparently oblivious to such meanings' (219). Moreover, media representations are indicted primarily for their distortion and deceitfulness. 'A diet of violent programming could teach my children... that murders, rapes and kidnappings take place in the real world at the same rate as on television, which, fortunately, is still far from true' (*Beyond Blame*). Masterman's more Marxist

[4] Considine is referring to a 1993 conference, *Safeguarding Our Youth*, convened by the Department of Justice, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services.

[5] Morley draws on the influential 'encoding / decoding' model offered by Stuart Hall, to argue that different readings are possible – dominant, negotiated and oppositional. The dominant reading is one fully of a piece with the ideology of the

perspective focuses on non-fictional and realist genres, on the grounds that 'the ideological power of the media is roughly proportional to the apparent naturalness of their representations' (21). His account of BBC coverage of the 1984-5 miners' strike accuses it of failing to 'report events *accurately*' (228, his emphasis).

Audiences are conceived as products of this environment, powerless victims who cannot resist the false ways of being and thinking offered by the media. Much of the concern focuses on 'our' children, 'awash in depictions of violence as the ultimate solution in human conflicts' (*Beyond Blame*) whose primary innocence might be corrupted by alien material. A contributor to *Media and Values* attacks slasher films on the grounds that 'a young male or female's first introduction to anything that might deal with human sexuality and the nude body could take place in a violent context'. Philo writes in his *Pulp Fiction* research about a girl 'with a cherubic face and golden curls' who wrote that she remembered 'things from the Bible and lots of swearing, motherfucker, shit, fuck, things from the bible'. The oft-quoted statistic about children spending more time with television than in schools suggests that their immersion in media culture has rendered them unable to make sense of what they encounter. Their lack of agency, however, makes them blameless, since the media, which in turn are following economic imperatives, condition them. A contributor to *Media and Values* explains why audiences watch media violence by referring to a classic laboratory experiment. He writes that: 'Programmers learned long ago that *as with the rat*, regular jolts of empty stimulation are the easiest and cheapest means of keeping viewers glued to the screen' (my emphasis). 'Jolts' give us a 'generalized rush of adrenalin' and their 'addictive power' hypnotises us into carrying on watching. Masterman asserts that meanings are made 'behind the backs' of audiences (5), contrasting 'those who manufacture information in their own interests' and 'those who consume it *innocently* as news or entertainment' (11, my emphasis). His analysis revolves around a fixed polarity of 'real' versus 'false' needs, authentic versus inscribed subjects, stressing that the capitalist system betrays people by turning them into objects that are 'sold to advertisers'. He thus praises Dorothy Hobson's 'moving and affirmative' work on the viewers of *Crossroads* (1981) for offering 'a rare glimpse of the *human reality* of how

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text, while the negotiated reading is more ambivalent – that is, the ideological stance of a text is adjusted to the specific

people, the elderly in particular, relate to the media' (221, my emphasis) and illuminating 'the gulf between those who control broadcasting and many of those who watch it' (301).

Constructing the media as all-powerful and as at least 'part of the problem' then establishes education as 'part of the solution' (*Beyond Blame*). The redemptive claims made for it by the CML and Masterman are at many points indistinguishable. The former draws on the strength of the green movement to present its own case as having similar urgency, writing with evangelical fervour of media literacy as a 'cause'. It declares that the skills it provides are 'essential for our future as individuals and as members of a democratic society'. As its metaphors of violence as an 'epidemic', a 'disease' and an 'addiction' would suggest, however, it is an aspect of health education, rather than a specific subject discipline (an earlier initiative was explicitly described as 'immunising' children against effects; Doolittle 1975). The CML's annual conference in 1998 was called 'Media Literacy: A Paradigm for Public Health'. Likewise, in the TES article cited above, Philo compares children's knowledge of 'drug dangers', derived from school, with their ignorance about violence. Just as teaching about drugs can prevent substance misuse, or sex education reduce teenage pregnancy, so media education may combat violence and intolerance in society and hence may have a special claim on public resources and funding. Masterman too describes media education as a 'life and death' matter (6) that can contribute to our 'democratic health' (14), since 'it is upon the ability of students leaving our educational institutions to think critically and make their own rational decisions that the future of our society depends' (37). Whilst for him it provides a broader social and political good, it remains a defensive enterprise – a 'necessary safeguard against the worst excesses of media manipulation for political purposes' (13). Moreover, both share educational objectives such as teaching the 'constructed' nature of media representations, their 'unique languages', commercial interests and 'embedded values and points of view'.

All three projects offer 'critical viewing' as the counter to children's immersion and the remedy for what they lack. A neutral space of education will provide a secure, protective 'framework' within which students can 'analyse', 'evaluate' and

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local conditions of viewers. The oppositional reading is totally opposed to the ideology in question (Hall 1980).

'recognise' media meanings and move from 'subservience' to 'critical liberation' (Masterman, 127), involvement to detachment, acceptance to scepticism and unconscious absorption to awareness. (Similar perspectives have been advanced by Fredric Jameson whose work Dan Fleming has applied to media education (1993). Jameson argues that the postmodern condition induces a loss of critical distance and therefore that we need a 'cognitive map' of the totality from which we can understand what is happening and mark out alternatives (Jameson 1988). I refer to this again in Chapter Five).

They each have a clear sense of who students will become as a result of the educational experience. *Critical Viewing* aims to make children view television violence in a new way, as 'less real' (a cognitive goal). Its success was assessed in part by how far children's responses to questions about police procedure and 'perceived television realism' moved closer to those of a 'norm' group of adult students, within a normative (Piagetian) developmental model in which children progress through stages to a more adequate adult understanding. *Beyond Blame* has the behavioural goal of making children watch less television (the equivalent in English might be teaching books in order to stop children reading). CML publications offer parental 'Better Viewing Guides', suggesting how and what children should watch on television and more desirable activities they should be involved in - 'sports, hobbies, reading'. Further, the authors argue that they want to enable children to 'participate actively in the public discussions that shape policies about media, and media violence, in our world', although in practice it seems that they view them as convenient conscripts into its own moral crusade. Towards the end of the sessions, students are exhorted to take direct action, for instance, by lobbying broadcasters through postcard campaigns.

Like *Beyond Blame*, Masterman addresses children in terms of their public identities as 'citizens' (a somewhat ironic move given that they are at an age when they are largely excluded from political power). Media education is a 'liberating human praxis' which will 'transform consciousness' (33) in students who are 'in principle' opposed to sexism, racism, and other oppressions. It will release their inherent 'potential', providing the agency and choice they have hitherto lacked. When he writes that 'as audience members we are ultimately responsible for making sense of media texts' (229), the 'responsibility' involved

seems to be a moral one; to decide whether to accept, reject or negotiate dominant meanings.

Teachers are allotted contradictory roles in this process. On the one hand, they can make a key contribution to the literacy 'movement', but on the other they are merely 'facilitators' and 'co-learners'. Indeed, in the case of *Beyond Blame* and *Critical Viewing* they primarily deliver a product developed elsewhere. 'With *just a couple of hours of preparation*', the CML website assures us, '*any teacher* or group leader new to this subject can begin to teach media literacy with basic resources developed by our Center' (my emphasis). Masterman refers to media teachers as a 'vanguard' who will radicalise their students, 'shaping a public consciousness capable of articulating the public interest and of urging popular control of information and information-generating institutions'. In ringing tones, he declares that 'if they fail to take up this challenge, then the future is bleak indeed. For if they will not do it, who else will?' (16-17). The power of the teacher is thus central and considerable. Media education will be 'as lively, democratic, group-focused and action-orientated *as the teacher can make it*' (27, my emphasis). She has to 'set this process in motion' (29), by selecting the texts studied (albeit through negotiation), providing crucial information and concepts that will set students free, and helping 'everyone concerned make problematic what they know' (28). However, he repeatedly disavows that this is the case. The classroom becomes a microcosm of a rational community in which dialogue involves a 'genuine sharing of power' (33). Teaching should move students on to 'critical autonomy', to 'stand as quickly as possible on their own two critical feet' (25). Knowledge can be grasped as an abstract object and transferred to other situations '*when the teacher is not there*' (25, his emphasis). He argues for pedagogies with a 'hard, critical edge', rather than (citing Giroux) 'a pot-pourri of encounter group happenings and process-bound interpersonal activities designed to enrich our existential selves with moments of collective warmth and cheery solidarity' (37).

Classroom Strategies

Each text provides different means to achieve critical detachment. The Dutch project supplies information about police procedure and the serious nature of

real-life violence to show the 'factual differences between film and real life'. In the programmes, extracts from crime dramas such as *Miami Vice*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Frank Buck* and *Magnum* are screened, which show improbably glamorous lifestyles, heroism, marksmanship, or police delight in shooting a suspect. Children are then presented with video footage of 'actual' victims and law enforcement officials. For instance, in the British version, kindly West Country policemen chuckle over how rarely they themselves use firearms. In a section from an American documentary, a police officer describes the traumatic effect on his life and marriage when he shot and killed a suspect. Dutch officers explain how they are 'put through the mangle' after a shooting, emphasising the 'punishing' process of investigation to which they are subjected by superiors, the press and politicians, especially if their victim came from an ethnic minority and they are suspected of racial prejudice. Finally, another drama clip is shown and children are asked to watch out for the differences between reality and fiction (e.g. 'how would real police officers react?'). This is described as a 'decentration' technique (142), which helps children to evaluate aspects of programmes that they are assumed not to notice in their everyday viewing.

The question of what is real or unreal, true or false, factual or fictional, is seen as self-evident and simple. Worksheets are provided that ask 'Did you think that the action (in a clip) was very realistic?' with a box provided for 'yes' and one for 'no'. The context might make it clear what the 'right' answer is, although the Dutch evaluation form poses a genuine dilemma: 'In detective programs (sic), most female detectives look lovely. Are real female detectives beautiful too?' Answer: yes / perhaps / no. The teaching focuses on the content and not the construction of texts; interviews and documentaries are treated as 'the truth' rather than as different versions of the meaning of crime and violence. It is not clear how this approach might deal with more recent programmes such as *Chopper Coppers*, *Police, Camera, Action!* and *Cops*, which blur the line between fact and fiction by using actual footage from police work, albeit edited in highly selective ways.

Indicting the media for giving impressionable children 'false notions about social reality' (Vooijs and Van der Voort 1993a: 139), highlights the political dimension of the project. '"Reality" in this view is what children *ought* to think, not how things are, because they will act on the basis of what they believe things to be'

(Hodge and Tripp 1986: 101). The teaching is a struggle to control children's perceptions of the world – as is evident from its attempt to persuade them that the police are 'in fact' benevolent, sensitive, cautious and (arguably) non-racist. Moreover, it is a premise of the work that attitudes can be changed by 'new information', provided it is supplied by a 'credible source'. By assuming that children perceive 'experts' such as policemen and detectives in this way, the authors position them as subordinates who willingly accept the trustworthiness of authority figures.

Beyond Blame enlightens students about how they have been 'fooled or mesmerized' by television by 'sharing' with them the findings of content analysis and behaviourist research. In one session, students multiply the number of hours of TV they watch by the number of violent acts they are said to contain, to produce a (presumably shocking) figure for the amount of violence they view per week. In another, 'Why is everyone watching?', children are told that producers attract audiences by using 'jolts' (moments of excitement), in order to keep them watching 'until the commercials come on!'. They then view clips, such as a promotional trailer for a film called *Terror In The Night* and 'count the jolts', in line with the theory of rats' conditioning outlined above. Subsequently, they receive handouts outlining the 'four effects' of viewing media violence. They are not invited to debate their own views on them, or informed how the findings have been reached. Instead, they are asked to contribute anecdotes that illustrate their validity - to 'remember a time when they themselves or someone they knew was affected by TV or media violence'. Examples are supplied to get them started, such as 'My older sister, who watches a lot of gory movies, doesn't trust anyone who is walking by on the sidewalk'. (This fallacious reasoning somewhat belies the claim that media literacy teaches 'critical thinking'. A similarly constructed statement, such as 'my brother, who eats cornflakes for breakfast, doesn't like to leave the house', does not 'prove' that cereal consumption causes agoraphobia). Such didactic teaching demands precisely the passive consumption they accuse the media of promoting.

Beyond Blame also echoes elements of the *Critical Viewing* approach. One session entitled 'What's missing from Media Violence?' uses video extracts to illustrate 'violent acts shown without their logical consequences'. One of these

(forty seconds long) is from the film *Witness* (1985); Harrison Ford punches a man who says 'boo' to him, leaving him with a bloody nose. After viewing, children have to answer questions like: 'Who will be sad? Who will clean away the mess? Who will have to go to the hospital? How long will they have to wait to be seen by a doctor?' In the next lesson, 'Violence Doesn't Solve Problems, It Causes Them', a longer (ninety-second) extract from the same scene is screened. This time, it shows the events running up to the fight: the man daubs an ice cream over the face of another character, who does not respond. It is said to illustrate the 'cycle of violence' in which minor events lead to greater violence, and students are encouraged to 'break the cycle' by providing a non-violent resolution.

Reducing the text to the literal and serious in this way evokes a narrative of signification marked by nostalgia for a lost origin. Once upon a time, *Beyond Blame* implies, violence had a 'real' referent (we used to know what it meant); its consequences were unified with the act, there was no gap between form and meaning. Now, however, the media have separated them, obscured their impact under the weight of convention. Education must restore this once-proper meaning, and make it live again. It thus loses the rich hesitation of fantasy and ambiguity. This is particularly clear in the case of *Witness*, which can be read as a meditation on the limits and advantages of pacifism. Harrison Ford plays John Book, a big city cop forced to stay in the Amish community in order to protect an eight year old boy who has witnessed a murder. The narrative explores the tensions between the lifestyle of the non-violent Amish and the more aggressive Book, finding something of value in each. In the scene described, Book has just learnt that his police partner has been murdered by the corrupt cops who are trying to track him down and the man he attacks is a coward, who only bullies the Amish because he thinks they will not fight back. It therefore invites audiences to debate both the motivations behind brutal acts, and how far non-violence is an appropriate response to those who are prepared to use force themselves.

A teacher who dealt with *Hamlet* by requiring students to 'resolve the problems shown without recourse to violence', or respond to the final bloodbath by discussing 'who will clean away the mess?' might rightly be considered to have

completely missed the symbolic meaning of the violence. *Beyond Blame*'s answer to such criticism lies, unsurprisingly, in the distinction between 'high' and 'low' culture, 'art' and 'entertainment'. It tells us that in 'great drama' violence occurs 'only to portray the rise and fall of a character who eventually recognises and regrets her or his terrible acts'. In 'action-adventure entertainment', by contrast, violence is 'gratuitous', 'an end unto itself', 'formulaic' and 'sanitised', used just to 'keep the action moving, to create emotional shock or to showcase special effects'.

In apparent contrast, Masterman's textual analyses mobilise a range of sophisticated semiotic tools and stress polysemy. Whilst the anti-violence projects see the function of media language as referential, he discusses 'mode of address' - how audiences are positioned in relation to texts through conventions of perspective, editing, narrative point of view, and so on. However, his description of textual deconstruction as 'breaking through their surface to reveal the rhetorical techniques through which meanings are produced' (127) also suggests that the visual can be peeled back to reveal a hidden reality. Cultural representations, on his account, are dictated by the wider economic forces of capitalism or the political intrigues of those who own, control and regulate the media. He argues that *Dallas*, for instance, is 'cheaply produced ... according to factory principles' (105), in a manner that suggests that alternative readings – for instance, by students who 'do believe (it) to be as lavishly produced as a block-buster movie' - are simply erroneous and must be displaced. However, the exact workings of these forces remain under-specified, particularly in relation to media personnel, who are dismissed as 'alienated' by assembly-line production processes and given little attention. In his earlier work he advocated working outwards from images towards 'a *recognition of and feeling for* – if not always a precise understanding of – the institutional and industrial contexts within which they are manufactured' (1980: 6, my emphasis). This might well produce the most generalised answers to the key media education questions of 'who produces this image? In whose interests?' (Bowker 1991 also advocates raising these questions).

Whilst Masterman acknowledges the relevance of theories of 'active audiences', he ultimately sees audiences as constituted rather than constituting. Dominant

texts, he remarks, often '*stitch* us into patriarchal sexist positions as "natural" ways of perceiving reality' (235, my emphasis). By contrast, his account of the 'alternative' textual strategies of *Boys from the Blackstuff* credits them with the ability to encourage 'an understanding of some of the complexities of unemployment' and to deny us 'a simple unitary response to the situation' (231). In his analysis of *Disney Time*, he notes the contrast between presenter Paul Nicholas's persona as 'family man', and his 'Jack the lad' character in the sitcom series *Just Good Friends*, but views the latter as overridden by rather than subversive of the former. His condemnation of 'standardised' media products such as soap operas, and desire to enable students to gain 'new and different forms of enjoyment' (239) – from alternative texts, for instance - suggest an ideal in which students consume 'better' products instead of or alongside less nutritious fare.

In viewing the media primarily as sources of information about the world or of 'values and beliefs', the projects are rationalistic and have little interest in exploring how texts might resonate for their audiences at the level of fantasy. Indeed, *Beyond Blame* instructs teachers to silence the expression of pleasure by overruling it with scientific authority. 'If the students describe TV violence as being fun or entertaining, explain that people who study the effects of media violence have found that violence has negative effects even if the audience 1) Thinks it's fun and entertaining and / or 2) Knows that media portrayals are not real'. Masterman views pleasure with suspicion, as 'rather less innocent' than it appears, a process by which consent to hegemony is won rather than something that we are deeply implicated in, and advocates its confession. 'We all, teachers and students alike, need to *own up* to the possibility that our media pleasures, which are actively produced *for us,* may be instrumental in engineering consent for forms of domination and oppression to which we are opposed' (240, my emphasis). Students should therefore work hard to overcome their appeal by 'problematising' or 'critically examining' 'structural connexions (*sic)* between dominant beliefs and dominant modes of pleasure production' (239).

Finally, the texts acknowledge that the notion of media as a 'language' requires the acquisition of new literacies in which students learn to write as well as to read within its forms, but strictly circumscribe what this might involve. Although

the Dutch project is purely text-based, *Teaching Television in the Primary School* does contain extensive suggestions for practical work in a section called 'Reality and Reflections', based on a Belgian scheme. It takes children through a series of exercises that alert them to how video cameras can create 'tricks and illusions' (42), such as altering the size of an object, and thus explore 'the difference between reality and the image of reality' (35). *Beyond Blame* 'gives a voice' to children to create media texts only on condition that they use it for socially approved purposes, such as producing posters to express their concerns about media violence, or creating their own non-violent TV shows or heroes.

Masterman allots only two pages from over three hundred to practical work. Even so, much of the section consists of caveats against beliefs that production will automatically enable students to acquire critical abilities without teacher input. He denounces 'cultural reproduction' as 'mere "busy work"' that naturalises dominant practices and is 'a poor aim for media education. It is uncritical; it enslaves rather than liberates; it freezes the impulse towards action and change; it produces deference and conformity' (27). By 'cultural reproduction' I understand him to refer to the production-based paradigm that I explain in Chapter Two and explore in Chapter Six, which allows students to construct representations within existing genres and to express their non-discursive, affective investments in media culture. Instead, he proposes 'less ambitious workshop activities, simulations and code-breaking exercises which can be woven into the fabric of a critical media education'. Other British media educators have similarly warned against 'uncritical' or 'slavish' imitation of existing media forms (see Hart 1998: 229). The Northern Examinations and Assessment Board (NEAB) A-Level syllabus, with which Masterman has been closely associated as Chief Examiner, for many years permitted only documentary rather than work within fictional forms, valuing the political and 'serious' over the commercial and ephemeral. It included only one practical production, in the second year (rather than the three initially allowed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syllabus (UCLES) Board, which I discuss in the next chapter). This has resulted, some claim, in new orthodoxies in which teachers and examiners recognise as 'subversive' only what conforms to their existing expectations (Grahame 1995).

Buckingham has read this adherence to oppositional production work in terms of curriculum politics in the 1980s. In order to develop a distinct 'academic' identity for Media Studies, writers contrasted the rigour of the subject and its concern for students' cognitive and intellectual development, with the supposed low expectations and undemanding processes of progressivist experiential work in Art or English (Buckingham 1998: 65). It derives also from Masterman's analysis of ideology; replication of conventions indicates that students have uncritically absorbed unacceptable values (Grahame 1995: 109), whereas breaking them indicates their separation and independence. He thus leaves little room for resistance except through a conscious gesture of revolt on the part of the individual, who must seize back media languages as an instrument to express an explicit counter-intention. We may discern here a Romantic fantasy of creativity and transformation, albeit read in political rather than aesthetic terms as a 'critical intervention', and a modernist investment in progress that sees the familiar as tainted and only the new as radical. Turkle argues that there is a 'humanist utopianism' in this narrative; once the workings of the text and thus of the social formation it mediates have been rendered transparent, both are available for appropriation and correction (Turkle 1997: 44). Feminist perspectives suggest that there is a masculine fantasy in the notion of a distanced, critical and autonomous subject who sets aside attachment and feeling in order to reach maturity and reason (Robertson 1997; Walkerdine 1990a). However, more recently Davies has argued for 'feminist poststructuralist' pedagogies in similar terms, as giving children the 'radical possibility' of disrupting the 'dominant storylines through which their gender is held in place' and new identities as 'producers of culture ... who *make themselves* and are made within the discourses available to them' (Davies 1993: 1 – 2, my emphasis).

A Moral Paradigm of Media Education

In sum, I would argue that these projects operate within a 'moral paradigm'[6] of education, which stresses duty, truth, mastery, separation, abstract principles, established hierarchies and individual responsibility. Despite disclaimers, their teaching sustains traditional relations of authority between teachers and students

and between outside 'experts' and teachers. It cannot be interactive, because it aims primarily to reveal a pre-existing truth about what meanings the media contain and how audiences receive them that students lack and teachers possess. Its cultural agenda promotes as a 'moral imperative' (Ellis 1978: 28) a realist aesthetic of probability and 'logical consequences' over the formulaic, spectacular and excessive (that is, of elite culture and non-fictional forms over mainstream Hollywood products and fantasy genres). It thus risks reinforcing rather than overcoming differences of taste and 'cultural capital' between teachers and students. For all that they insist on the 'power' of popular media, we might argue that they figure as a subordinate and marginalised culture within education, in that they are not acknowledged as a valid source of learning. Later in this thesis I will contrast this moral paradigm to what I will term an 'ethical' one that can encompass pleasure, involvement, relation and accountability, not only to texts, but also to collective others, within and beyond the class.

In relation to the media industries, they issue broad assertions that support a conspiratorial view of the workings of the media industries, rather than detailed case studies of actual production processes. A view of the media as driven by the wider ideological imperatives of the capitalist system does little to explain how industries can and do produce texts that run counter to their own interests (Buckingham 1986). In relation to media products, they concentrate on discrete texts or brief extracts taken out of context that must be interpreted and mastered, excluding the unstable, processural, intertextual and everyday nature of the media experience. In insisting that they have found an order of discourse that can make sense of the media as a whole, they suppress those drawn from other sources. Young people's points of view, their fascination and engagement with the media, desires to work within rather than against the industry, are discounted. Indeed, what they do have to say is likely to be used as evidence of how they have been deceived and misled. The projects fail to reference ethnographic or qualitative audience research, except – as I argued in relation to Masterman's account of Hobson's work – where it can be recuperated into an image of authenticity betrayed by commercial imperatives.

[6] Charlotte Brunsdon has this term in the context of an analysis of the discourses of 'quality' in debates about broadcasting (1990).

The concepts and information they offer are treated as unproblematically transparent, whilst this is denied to the media texts to which they are applied. Because they see the classroom as a neutral space of critique and rational conduct they do not address its power relations or the mediating effects of pedagogic interpretive 'games' that constitute texts as objects of knowledge. Supposedly 'inductive' methodologies can in practice be prescribed in advance, with students discovering exactly what their teachers expect them to, as others have found (Edwards and Mercer 1987). The anti-violence projects in particular are spectacularly oblivious to students' likely familiarity with received public messages about the media. As David Buckingham's research shows, in interviews even young children readily trumpet their contempt for 'silly' and unrealistic texts, or express concerns about their bad influence (on other people), without any teaching at all (1993). Other writers have pointed to the complexities of student resistance to teacherly perspectives, of the differentials of power and interest between participants (Buckingham 1986; Cohen 1991; Walkerdine 1990b). Foucault's work on the connections between power and knowledge demands a rethinking of 'critical' pedagogies that claim to emancipate, to question how they reinscribe power in different ways rather than remove it (Gordon 1980; Hunter 1994; Rabinow 1984). Masterman writes, for example, that teachers 'will need to develop a sensitive and close working knowledge of the cultural competencies and sub-cultural differences which exist within their groups, so that they can predict with some accuracy the range of responses which a particular text is likely to elicit' (220). Whilst this might seem humane – an assertion of students' individual value and difference – it might also serve to normalise and categorise them. I will show that this point is highly relevant to classroom discussion of horror films, where students themselves anticipate 'likely' and appropriate responses, particularly in terms of gender. Likewise, his incitement to 'confess' our pleasures reinscribes power as a conscience-forming practice, turning students' inner selves into texts that are investigated and interpreted by teachers. It raises the question of whether those who refuse to reflect or admit complicity will be designated irrational and excluded (Ellsworth 1997).

Their lack of reflexivity extends to their own position. We might contrast, for example, the passionate, engaged and emotive language with which they

demonise media effects (and affects), with their visions of a rationalistic and critical education that displaces feeling. Masterman, condemning the media for promoting 'an *ambience* sympathetic to advertisers and consumerism' (114) appears to denounce consumerism in its entirety, as wrong both morally and factually. Yet both he and *Beyond Blame* are deeply implicated in the workings of the market. The CML advertises itself as a 'first-stop shopping service' to which purchasers should 'stay tuned!' to 'choose with confidence' the 'must-have' items from its catalogue. 'Your Guarantee of Quality is knowing your resource is "Selected, Evaluated and Distributed by the CML"', the 'source you can trust', it intones, in the language of a nineteenth-century fairground hawker flogging talismanic remedies. Similarly, discourses of consumption run throughout *Teaching the Media*. Its general arguments draw on consumer protection models, which perceive audiences as the passive receivers of the end product of a manufacturing process over which they have little control, who must therefore be protected from its abuses. Masterman also envisions all media teachers becoming, effectively, salespeople: 'we shall need to be not simply teachers of, but *advocates for* our subject, *advancing* its cause whenever we can within our own institutions, amongst parents and with colleagues and policy makers. Our reasoning will need to be *compelling* and *persuasive*, as well as plain and intelligible' (1, his emphasis). Paradoxically, then, he becomes a persuader in order to be a critic of media persuasion, although he claims greater moral status for his own position. His book has indeed provided successful publicity for media education in general, just as his textual analyses might be read as advertisements for the specific techniques he proposes (cf Bowlby 1993). He further distinguishes between capricious consumption, in thrall to the media and 'seemingly oblivious' to dominant meanings and one that is 'more discerning, sceptical and knowledgeable' (11), based on a stock of accumulated information and skills, in control of self and meaning and consciously 'deviant' (219, cited above).

As Bowlby has noted, such discourses are implicitly gendered, contrasting feminine frivolity and masculine calculation (1993). She further argues that there are two types of advertising address by which emotional appeals are made to consumers, both of which operate here. The first is the promise; 'an invitation to pleasure or to excess; to have or be something more, something else, something

new'. The second is a warning, the suggestion of fears or needs; 'the buyer must identify himself as lacking and so purchase the product in order to put things right or to protect what is vulnerable' (101). The latter has been used to 'sell' media education. Teachers may buy the products offered by Masterman, the CML and others in order to remedy their own 'lack' of knowledge of media education, but they also do so on the basis of a need to protect 'vulnerable' children. When Masterman argues for a 'celebratory' approach to the positive and pleasurable aspects of the media (238) as a 'motivating mechanism' to generate enthusiasm for media education (224), however, he addresses students as hedonistic consumers, who can be seduced into the classroom by the promise of what they will find there. One of the issues I wish to pursue in this thesis is whether Media Studies can make good on its 'promise' once students have enrolled, by inviting them to build on fascination and excess, to become 'something more', rather than threatening them with what they lack.

Other critics have taken a more positive approach to pleasure, as that which can move us and deliver the unexpected (Mercer 1986), and thus provide a basis for disruption rather than stabilisation of meaning. A view of the media as a stable system that endlessly reproduces its meanings is unable to explain the sources of the authors' own critique or whether resistance and transformation are possible except from a sphere beyond it. However, we might see something 'unexpected' in the evaluations of the *Critical Viewing* project. The authors found that students (dutifully?) stated that they found the lessons 'instructive and useful', but that some criticised the input from experts and most remarked that watching the TV drama clips was the most 'attractive' part. The project is premised on a view that finding media violence enjoyable is evidence of desensitisation, so these 'inappropriate' responses may convey children's resistance to the paternalist perspectives they were offered. They may also show that recognising a text as 'unrealistic' does not necessarily shake our emotional involvement with it, which might encourage some to redouble their efforts to dislodge the affective hold of the media. However, read in the light of Judith Butler's account of linguistic agency (Butler 1997), the children's minor act of insubordination here is to my mind more promising pedagogically. The authors, like Masterman and *Beyond Blame*, assume that the media have the power to make (media) language act and to fix meaning – to convince children, for

instance, that crime series are 'more or less true to life'. They can only be countered by others (actual policemen) who are invested with the legitimate authority to make them signify differently, as 'less real'. However, to prove this point – to tell children what the programmes 'really' mean and how they should respond – the authors cite the offending items. In so doing, they introduce them to the new context of the classroom where they are made contestable; children read them as 'attractive' and pleasurable rather than as unrealistic, precisely against the authors' 'intentions'. In later chapters, I will explore the classroom as itself a site in which texts may be subversively appropriated and made to mean differently, and how far critical agency might thus emerge from within rather than outside the workings of media language.

Making Movies Matter

In my analysis of *Making Movies Matter* I want to focus on how it negotiates between the demands of those who contributed to it and those whom it addresses, between competing versions of education's function (as a 'long term strategy' or as an 'aspect of marketing', for instance (back cover)). Its contradictory location – within education, state bureaucracies and media industries - I will argue, exposes faultlines in the moral paradigm of media education considered so far.

The Report itself notes that 'nearly a third of the evidence submitted to the FEWG concerned the cultural status and assumed class affiliations of different kinds of film' (7), and that 'the most substantial single area of evidence submitted ... concerned the narrowness of the range of films available... This was expressed in terms of excessive numbers of films from the USA' (20). For instance, the UK Reading Association complains of children's 'insufficient access to a wide range of quality films' (28). A 'former cinema manager' warns that 'Film-makers and audiences with little awareness of cinema before *Star Wars* cannot but lead us into a dark ages of the filmed image'. Few Hollywood products and no recent blockbusters are referenced or used as illustrations in the Report. Further, it was introduced in *The Guardian* as recommending that 'Schools should help to wean the next generation of children off an unhealthy diet of American 'blockbuster-style' movies by encouraging them to enjoy a more varied diet of British-made, 'alternative' and foreign language films on the big

screen'. That is, the Report was based on and has been publicly placed within the terms of a debate about culture that revolves around binary oppositions between high and low culture, educational and mainstream, art and entertainment, dominant and alternative forms (Buckingham and Jones 2000).

However, the authors frame these contributions in a way that suggests they are engaged in an exercise in damage limitation. It bemoans 'the constant elision of culture and class' in evidence it received, as reflecting 'deep tensions and models of production and consumption that may be losing their relevance' (7). We may read here an oblique reference to the issue of culture in postmodernity, which many analysts have argued involves the radical reconfiguration and dispersal of categories of cultural authority (Collins 1995; Frow 1995). However, to argue that older models are no longer 'relevant' suggests they are mistaken and can be unproblematically corrected. If, as it would seem, educators continue to invest in them, then they can be said still to exist, because they are likely to have real material effects in the classroom. They do, however, raise the question of how young people locate themselves in relation to them; I explore such questions in later chapters.

The Group itself rejects arguments that it is proposing a single cultural model, favouring one kind of film, or undervaluing Hollywood, claiming instead that it wants to 'celebrate the brilliance of our global moving image heritage' (7). It distances itself from 'the pusillanimous British habit of blaming it for society's every ill', and its notion of film as a 'language' emphasises cultural expression rather than damaging action. It describes its educational aims in relatively neutral terms of wanting to encourage 'appreciation', 'awareness' and 'enjoyment' of the 'sheer variety' of the moving image. Where the previous projects claim to range forces against media institutions, it is pragmatic in viewing education as a means of achieving economic goals as well as personal development and in acknowledging that links exist between the nation-state's own self-interest and the school. Thus although it stresses the role of media education in creating an 'informed citizenry', it also appeals to media industries to invest in it to create consumer-subjects. It implies that education can inculcate an idea and knowledge of national culture that is threatened by the globalisation (Americanisation) of the media and young people's loyalty to Hollywood. (For a

more general analysis of such trends in education, see Readings 1996). More cine-literate, 'informed and critically engaged' audiences will make more 'adventurous' cultural choices and thus secure the competitiveness of British products in the film marketplace. Practical work too is justified on the basis that it 'inevitably widens the range of what they are prepared to see' (45). Where previous approaches aim to offer students immunity from the media, it promotes a more constructive vision of education as the enhancement of receptivity to them – as, perhaps, the 'cultivation of desire' (Usher and Edwards 1994: 186-206). However, it fails to address what this can mean in a climate where Britishness can no longer be constructed on the basis of a single national ethnicity. The introduction notes the break-up of the nation under recent moves to devolution and national assemblies in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales; and a later section on cultural diversity mentions in a celebratory fashion both 'racial/ cultural identities' and 'language communities' (22). Yet if education is a strategy to stimulate film production – which itself assumes that consumer demand drives the industry – it is unclear how it can do so, given that the versions of Britishness that prove most profitable on the global market - such as the *Bond* series or *Notting Hill* - bear little resemblance to these new forms.

The Appendix proposes 'Models of Learning Progression' as a starting point for 'more rigorous discussion of what moving image education really should entail' (47). They include a list of 'Experiences and Activities', glossed as 'the inputs learners would need', which stress 'seeing' or 'looking at' a 'wide range' of texts from different world cultures, including early, silent, subtitled and experimental films. These would seem to meet the demands of their contributors, since they gesture towards a notion of culture as source rather than effect of representation, a content that can have beneficial effects regardless of the teaching that goes on around it. The report refers to the study of 'film, video and television' (FVT), not of cross media products. Obviously this has some strategic function for bodies such as the BFI and Film Education. It is also easier for valuable culture to be defined as a set of objects (single texts, the opus of great directors) than located across the convergence of multi-media industries. In the 'New Hollywood', as Schatz remarks, it is hard to isolate 'the text' itself, let alone to separate aesthetic or narrative qualities from commercial imperatives (1993). Indeed, the desirable texts that young people should encounter are described

throughout the Report non-referentially, as what they are not: 'non-mainstream', 'more challenging', 'uncommercial', 'a broader range' and so on. An early draft contained proposals for a canon of ten great films, but abandoned it. This represents a shift from what we might otherwise read as elements of a Leavisite agenda in the Report's hostility to commercial, mainstream, especially American, products. As other commentators have noted, Leavis was not simply concerned with defensive media education. He also had a confident sense of a 'Great Tradition' of literary texts, linked to an organic vision of the possibility of a unified national culture, and of the school as one of the apparatuses through which the production of national subjects was to take place (Doyle 1989). At the end of the 1990s, agreed frameworks and functions for national identity and culture are absent. Whilst there might be consensus that literature can no longer carry the cultural weight it once did, there is not to hand a ready set of alternative canonical media texts.

The Models also include a list of outcomes, or 'what learners should be able to do', under three conceptual headings of Film Language, Producers and Audiences, Messages and Values. The latter suggests such 'concepts' as identifying how texts can 'show things that have not "really" happened e.g. violence' (Stage 2); proposes key words such as realism, realistic, unrealistic, non-realistic, stereotype and authentic at Stage 3; and the evaluation of texts with 'strong ideological messages' at Stage 4. Like the previous projects, these suggest that meaning is stable and identifiable rather than discursively produced and treat concepts as means by which to grasp the pre-existing truths of texts and achieve 'critical' and detached viewing. What it means to 'experience' a text, the inescapably social and political processes by which texts arrive in the classroom or on the market, is not raised.

A conceptual approach may reflect a wish to be pragmatic, permitting local creativity and integrating a wide range of activities into a generalised market in media education. But I would argue that the Models' admixture of vacuity and specificity, flexibility and prescriptiveness, concepts and content, speaks most loudly of the need to adjudicate competing versions of culture and education in postmodern times. Whilst the Report rejects notions of media education as simply a defensive enterprise, it implicitly admits that it cannot feasibly be about

installing specific identities, such as Britishness, or conveying valuable culture – because it is no longer entirely clear what referent such concepts have. It thus raises but leaves unanswered the question of what media education would look like if it cultivated consumer desire, invited students to become 'something more'.

Conclusion

The approaches considered here might be considered as what Collins describes as 'panic reactions' to the dominance of media in contemporary culture (Collins 1995). We might question how far they are a response to a genuine problem and meet children's needs, or whether, as with other moral panics, they serve as vehicles for general social anxieties about trends in contemporary life or are tactical for specific interest groups. (On moral panics, see Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994; Jenkins 1992; Thompson 1998). The anti-violence projects, in particular, may reflect adults' desires to control young people's sexuality, behaviour and access to information, maintaining the power of the privatised family against the influence of the public media. We might also see here a 'politics of substitution', in which a specific problem is focused on because another cannot be addressed directly (Jenkins 1992: 10). Technological change enabling marketing to 'niche' audiences, and a more liberal moral climate, make it difficult for groups with a conservative social agenda, such as the CML, to denounce graphic violence as long as it is seen as a private issue for adults. Basing claims about on its effects on children circumvents this problem, as they can more easily be presented as victims.

We also find, in the debates outlined here, a number of influential claims-makers, each with a set of interests. For an agency such as the British Board of Film Classification, turning its attention to educational initiatives may be a means of redefining its role in the face of potential redundancy. Educators, campaigning groups or individuals such as the CML or Philo may have an independent stake in bringing the issue to the fore, since it will help advance their status, power, and material resources (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994: 139). And, of course, it is easier for government agencies and policy-makers to demonise the media than to tackle more complex issues underlying youth violence, such as poverty

and unemployment. Moreover, the credibility of the projects may also derive from their consonance with existing cultural agendas and their broadly modernist faith in the power of rationalist critique.

However, a moral panics analysis tends to devalue 'irrational' outrage in order to claim for itself the reason that can reveal and evaluate underlying aims and intentions on the part of particular groups, as if the language they use can be bypassed. In this respect, my comparison of Masterman and *Beyond Blame* warns against doing so. Their respective visions of the good society have little in common, yet they structure their claims to legitimacy in very similar ways. Further, if discourses are practices that 'systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: 49), then we need to attend to how they constitute concepts, rather than assume that they already exist 'out there'. In relation to sex and violence, many writers have shown that censorship and regulation of the media are formative rather than simply repressive (e.g. Kuhn 1988). In this thesis I focus rather on how teaching regulates the speech considered appropriate to achieve an identity as a 'student'. In the first three projects, for example, we have seen that students are required to speak seriously, as responsible and concerned citizens. To make a joke of media violence, to see it as fun or entertaining, to celebrate its pleasures without problematising them, is to speak as someone else – a troublemaker, perhaps.

None of these projects include the voices of young people and the practices of teachers (they could perhaps not have been written if they had). Thus I also aim to provide 'bottom up' accounts of classroom practice. I do not assume that I am thereby presenting unproblematic 'real' subjects, but I do aim to explore how they might trouble the approaches advocated here.

Finally, I also want to speculate on why these projects may appeal positively to teachers; so far I have emphasised that they are sold to them on the basis of their lack. Consider the following statements:

> ... important breakthroughs in student consciousness are possible, however, when they are given the opportunity to inspect the kinds of journals and materials, commonplace in the industry, which treat audiences unashamedly as commodities.

(Masterman 1985: 227)

> (Under the heading 'Big Screen Revelation'): a few years ago I watched *The Searchers* with a group of sixth-formers who didn't particularly enjoy westerns, but the opening sequences really caught their imagination and they were visibly moved by the interplay of looks between the characters... (which) is barely noticeable on the TV screen
>
> (comment from a drama and media teacher, Film Education Working Group 1999)

Both well encapsulate the 'desired, imagined reality of classroom life', holding out the promise of a powerful identity for teachers (Robertson 1997: 78). They suggest the paramount importance of what teachers provide, whether new experiences (films on the big screen), or materials (trade magazines) to which students would not spontaneously have access. They tap into popular culture's representations of teachers who can change students' lives (see Weber and Mitchell 1995) and they have a long history, as Grace has explored in his work on the identity of the urban schoolteacher (Grace 1978). Whilst we might want to challenge the deficit model of students' culture and knowledge on which they depend, we cannot dispense readily with the 'dream of love' they represent[7]. If there is no essential self expressed in language, but only one constituted in relation to others, the act of communicating (including in teaching) has an unconscious aspect, a plea for recognition of the self by the other (Usher and Edwards 1994: 71). In these two moments, students, in being moved to tears, in coming to greater awareness, return to teachers what they are seeking – the recognition of their identity as the good teacher. How that 'good teacher' is defined will depend on how the teacher conceives her role (as primarily sensitising or radicalising, for instance). But any account of pedagogy, including recommendations for innovation, must reckon with the demand and desire teachers invest in what they offer.

[7] In this sense, my approach differs from Walkerdine who criticises the notion of 'love' in progressive pedagogies for entrenching women in roles as carers (1981).

Chapter Two - Horror Texts and Audiences

In this chapter I give a selective review of academic and theoretical approaches to the horror genre, 'violent' media and their audiences. It anticipates the classroom teaching I observed, in which horror films were considered as an example of a film genre, or within discussions of the 'effects debate', and aims to provide some sense of the traditions that shaped it. Thus I have organised it according to the categories of 'institutions' or industry, texts and audiences, as are A-Level Media Studies courses, and refer to published teaching materials where relevant. I do not discuss horror as a literary and televisual genre, which were not concerns of the teachers.

Genre and Industry

Early attempts to engage with popular culture on its own terms, rather than those more appropriate to high culture, studied genre as part of Hollywood's system of commodity production and marketing. They offered descriptions of generic constructs and a narrative of their evolution (focused particularly on the Western) in which they were seen as passing through cycles of emergence, 'golden age' and decline into parody (e.g.: Bazin 1971; Bazin 1976; Warshow 1979). A popular classroom approach derived from this model is to request students to fill in charts listing typical elements of particular genres, under headings such as character types, themes, iconography, setting and stars. Such practices tend to stress product standardisation rather than differentiation or innovation, and thus may reinforce dismissive attitudes to popular culture as simply reproducing existing conventions. One teaching pack explicitly compares genres to cookery recipes, a 'private eye' movie to a 'fruit cake' (Davies 1987), as if the process of production is geared towards a predetermined outcome whose success can be more or less guaranteed. Neale's more dynamic model of genres, as not just types of films, but as constituted by the knowledge of the 'rules, norms and laws' appropriate to different media materials, shared by audiences and film-makers, renders such descriptive and containing strategies increasingly problematic (Neale 1980; Neale 1990). Further, they are barely able to encompass the creativity with which, some have argued, the 'New

Hollywood' (post-1975) rejuvenates and reconfigures existing forms in its search for new audiences in a context of social, technological and demographic change (Schatz 1993). Collins notes that many recent films work through eclectic, self-reflexive and ironic hybridisation of 'pure' genres, crossing boundaries and fusing high and low cultural references and techniques, so that it becomes impossible to allocate them to a single generic type (Collins 1993). Much modern horror is held to exemplify precisely these characteristics (Brophy 1986).

As I noted in the previous chapter, little information has been made available to secondary media education about actual production processes (although see Grahame 1998, for work in relation to soap opera). Practical work has been offered as one means by which students may gain a sense of the industrial and economic constraints that shape texts, but there is little consensus on how effectively it does so, or how it might be evaluated (Grahame 1990).

Studies of Texts

The decoding of media 'languages', forms and conventions, Morgan remarks, continues to be the 'reigning pedagogical genre' of secondary media education (Morgan 1996). Yet whilst much criticism presents itself as delineating meanings already 'in' the text, there is little agreement on which features are most significant in bestowing them. Formalist or literary traditions may focus on surface aspects of characters, events, settings and narratives; structuralist approaches on underlying themes and oppositions; psychoanalytic criticism explores more specifically cinematic codes such as mise-en-scene, lighting, editing, effects and camerawork. Each in turn embodies assumptions about how audiences relate to the text, as I will show. In this section, I consider textual analysis as a 'performative act' or 'active intervention in meaning-making' that has the potential not only to generate new ways of looking at media products, but also to make new identities available to readers. (For these arguments, see: Bennett 1985: 8; Halberstam 1995: 144; Modleski 1991: 46). For this reason I do not offer my own definition of horror, but explore how its discursive construction may challenge or sustain existing educational practices, how it

delimits areas of study and how it relates to audience understandings and competencies. To give some examples: Carol Clover uses video shop classifications that tend to identify low budget and low-status films as 'horror', which she claims capture public perceptions of the term (Clover 1992: 5, fn.5). It is not clear how she would deal with more recent high-budget films such as *Scream* (1996) that are marketed as 'thriller' but widely described as horror. She also bases much of her argument in her final chapter on *Peeping Tom* (1960), an inclusion whose paradoxical consequences I explore in Chapters Six and Seven. Secondly, Noel Carroll's definition of horror is premised on the arousal of audience 'fear and disgust' in response to a 'threatening and impure' monster that is 'any being not now believed to exist according to reigning scientific notions' (Carroll 1990: 35). As Sconce notes, this would exclude a film like *Freddy's Dead* (1991) which provokes exhilaration and laughter, or the human monster of *Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer* (1987), yet many audiences would categorise both as 'horror' (Sconce 1993). Further, Carroll focuses on 'art' (fictional) horror and does not consider 'natural' (real-life) horror, although Moss has shown that news stories provide one relevant frame of reference for children attempting to define what is 'scary' (Moss 1993).

Horror as 'art'

Early academic approaches to horror attempted to reclaim specific texts as art, or as the product of particular auteurs, as did Film Studies in general in the 1960s and early 70s (Butler 1970; Clarens 1971; Kawin 1986; Pirie 1973; Rockett 1982). Typically they perpetuated conventional cultural judgements, as in this 1974 account by William Everson of 'horror now', in which he claims that it

> attempts to outdo its predecessors in the only way it knows, by adding grisly shock upon repugnant sensation. It is no trick to revolt and nauseate an audience via blood, decapitation, detailed killings, close ups of floating hearts and eyeballs. It is the easiest, laziest trick in the world. And it proves over and over again that the most effective screen horror is still the least detailed screen horror.... Contemporary audiences, hardened by bloodletting, increasingly laced by graphic sex, must find it hard to believe that the slow, stately, underplayed and often theatrical chillers of the early 30s really scared audiences. Yet they did, and were

> so effective at it that there was no need to sell the films via sensational ad campaigns
>
> (Everson 1974: 7)

Here, emotional reactions (fear), created by audience imagination, are valorised over the physical (disgust or the 'gross-out'), automatically induced by the text, echoing the cultural hierarchy of mind over body; narrative (story-telling) and older cultural forms like drama (the theatrical) are seen as superior to the visceral, spectacular and cinematic. Modern (youth) audiences are implicitly indicted for their 'jaded palate', sensation-seeking, lack of depth of feeling, intellectual development or attention span. Translated into classroom practice, such views define 'cultural literacy' as a familiarisation with the great and good, with the teacher positioned implicitly as a persuader who must supplant students' existing preferences.

Everson's narrative of decline is reliant on nostalgia for a time that may never have existed; Universal's *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* were surrounded by controversy and censorship when they were first released in the 1930s (Skal 1994: chapter 3). As my comments in Chapter One suggest, its evaluative hierarchies may still be relevant to teachers. In the era before video, they could also determine what texts were made available in the classroom. In the 1970s, for instance, the British Film Institute produced a teaching pack on genre that included slides from then newly acclaimed horror such as *Frankenstein*. However, Collins argues that new technologies, in providing access to a far greater range of texts, for more diverse audiences, have led to a proliferation of 'taste publics' (Collins 1995: 27-8). They may therefore have undermined the privilege of critics to pronounce on value and construct the canon. The possibility that younger generations are indeed 'more attuned to spectacle than narrative' (Sconce 1993: 112) also suggests the need for pedagogies that move beyond such literary approaches.

Horror as 'mythic Clearasil'[1]

Many critics have analysed popular generic forms as secular 'myths' that express and resolve cultural values and problems. Horror films commonly figure here as a 'rite of passage' for the adolescent audience, either on the basis of their narratives and images (Docherty 1988; Evans 1975a; Evans 1975b; Twitchell 1985) or the viewing experience (Zillmann and Gibson 1996a; Zillmann and Weaver 1996b; Zillmann et al. 1986). Such arguments do have the virtue of seeing horror as pedagogic rather than negative in its effects, and may well make it seem an appropriate topic in secondary schools. However, they treat all horror films as versions of the same basic stories or archetypes, whilst they are often unwittingly revealing of their own heterosexist biases. Adolescents are assumed to be positioned between 'onanism' or asexuality and a 'mature' reproductive sexuality by Twitchell (a 'vanilla' Freudianism, as Clover notes (1992, 217n.)), or in a turmoil of 'out of control' pubertal desires that must be 'tamed and sanctified by marriage' (Evans 1975b: 57). They propose a unitary 'consciousness' in teenagers that is nonetheless frequently gendered male. Docherty, for instance, claims that 'the remarkable development of *Cyclops* (1957), *The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957) ... and the disheartening diminution of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1955) ... are elastic expressions of the ebb and flow of pubescent development' (Docherty 1988: 153). It is hard to see how such analyses might deal with 'adult' horror films such as *Silence of the Lambs* (1991), or indeed texts targeted at the pre-teen market, such as the *Goosebumps* series. Zillmann's argument that watching horror films is a modern-day 'initiation ritual' through which boys learn to display fearlessness and girls dependence on a 'masterful mate', draws on a theory of gender-role socialisation in which patterns of male and female behaviour, laid down in ancient times, persist unchanged. Such evolutionary psychology has of course been challenged, both for the adequacy of its evidence and the accuracy of its interpretation (Angiers 1999). His work is shot through with sexist value judgements and improbable descriptions of the horror audience. Masterful behaviour in men is read as strength, but as 'uppitiness' or even bitchiness in women (1996b: 84); distress (i.e. expressing emotions) in men as effeminate.

[1] (Crane 1994)

On his 'snuggle theory of horror', films are assumed to be watched primarily by heterosexual couples. 'Like obedient dolls', he writes, 'the distressed ladies are to seek comfort from their male dates who became (sic) instant heroes by not blinking an eye when heads were rolling' (1996a: 26). However, it does suggest some ways that cultural practices such as horror viewing may be sites for the re-production of gender difference in the context of heterosexual relations. Here, even Zillmann comments that the woman's 'play-acting' of gender-appropriate behaviour is more demanding than the man's. Both genders become habituated to horror after regular viewing, yet while this assists the male in his display of mastery, it requires the woman to work harder at pretending to be distressed (1996b: 86).

Horror as social history

Cultural-historical genre studies read films as evidence of the concerns and attitudes of the specific period in which they were created (in relation to horror, see Crane 1994; Derry 1977; Hutchings 1993; Jancovich 1996; Rathgeb 1991; Tudor 1989). Representatively, Tudor identifies a shift from a 'secure' pre-1960s world to a 'paranoid' post-60s one through evolving conventions in horror. For instance, the source of the threat (the monster) changes from an external force, such as aliens or 'foreign' vampires, to an internal one, such as psychosis, as settings too move from the exotic to more everyday. Effective authority / expert figures are eclipsed by a new 'victim centrality' and the rise of 'everyman' victim-heroes. Narratives become more open-ended and morally ambiguous; the threat is either not defeated or triumphs. He holds that this reflects a loss of faith in traditional beliefs, such as in the principles of intelligibility and rationality, in fixed binary oppositions between an ordered known world and the unknown, and between self/ subject and other/ object world. Others have aligned such changes with post-modernism (Boss 1986; Modleski 1986; Pinedo 1996; Pinedo 1997), although they differ over whether these should be read as progressive (Pinedo) or reactionary (Modleski).

Such approaches challenge both traditional aesthetic evaluations of modern horror and the agenda of behaviourist research. As Tudor argues, the relevant

question is not about effects, but about the nature of the society in which the films make sense. 'If we assume, as we must, that horror movies are intelligible and coherent experiences for their audiences, then we have to ask ourselves what the world must be like for that to be the case' (1989: 212). Significantly, they argue that gory special effects, high levels of explicit violence and the fascination with the spectacle of the 'ruined body' are constituent, not gratuitous, features of modern horror, reflecting a sense of subjectivity as fragmented, out of control and under attack from within rather than from outside. 'Telling' rather than 'showing' would therefore be beside the point (Brophy 1986). They may be popular in the classroom because they position students as sociologists or social historians, thus meeting implicit objectives of citizenship education. Pirie's teaching pack on Hammer Horror, for instance, includes exhaustive background detail on social, political and economic changes in post-war Britain (Pirie 1980).

However, they often stress differences rather than continuities between films in order to sustain their argument. They may, for instance, ignore hybridity and pastiche, or insecurities about human nature and sexuality found in earlier films (Benshoff 1997; Berenstein 1996; Creed 1990). They have been charged with under-theorising the relation between social and generic change (Williams 1988 discusses such issues in relation to film noir; Medovoi, 1998 #661 in relation to *Blacula*). Whilst the popularity of a film - if mentioned – is assumed to indicate that its message is particularly significant, critics rarely explore in any detail how the audience relates to the themes they identify, or indeed what films may mean to later audiences. Trends towards marketing different genres to 'niche' audiences undermine claims that the films provide evidence of the collective psyche of a given period (Collins 1993).

Ideological analysis

As the title of Biskind's book – *Seeing is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* - suggests, ideological analysis sees the media as 'teaching' their audiences how and what to think. His argument that the monsters of 1950s science fiction / horror embodied 'the Communist threat'

that must be defeated is now well known (Biskind 1983). Robin Wood similarly argues that monsters represent society's 'Others' that threaten 'normality', the world of dominant ideology. 'The true subject of the horror genre is the struggle for recognition of all that our civilisation *re*presses or *op*presses; its re-emergence dramatised, as in our nightmares, as an object of horror... the 'happy ending' (when it exists) typically signifying the restoration of oppression' (1985: 201). These approaches are grounded in a distinction between surface and underlying meanings. Wood writes that 'full awareness stops at the level of plot, action and character, in which the most dangerous and subversive implications can disguise themselves and escape detection' (ibid.: 203). Whilst they acknowledge textual complexity and see films as active and influential in shaping definitions of 'the real' rather than passively reflecting it, they position audiences as essentially innocent and vulnerable. They thus accord a crucial role to the critic, who can liberate students from passive acceptance of 'the "other guy's" opinions, systems of value, ideologies' deviously encoded into the films, and reveal their 'real meaning' (Biskind 1983: 6). Texts are generally analysed individually (although Hess dismisses the horror genre as a whole for reconciling audiences to the status quo (1977)) and assessed on social or political grounds. However, the diagnoses here are frequently contradictory: *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) or *The Thing From Another World* (1951) figure as both radical (to Wood and Jancovic respectively) and reactionary (Modleski and Biskind). The links to Masterman's approach considered in Chapter One should be evident.

Psychoanalytic Approaches

Horror's status as a fantasy rather than a realist genre means that it has often attracted psychoanalytic readings. One strand focuses on exploring the connections between meanings in texts and repressed thoughts or fantasies regarded as constituting the unconscious (Creed 1986; Creed 1993; Neale 1980; Williams 1983). These are generally held to relate to male fears of female sexuality, and critics thus evaluate individual films for their degree of misogyny. Clover's work on films such as slashers challenges this theoretical assumption of a sadistic male spectator identifying with a star of the same gender, which

she calls a 'status-quo supportive cliche of modern cultural criticism' that has not served 'real life women and feminist politics' well (1992: 226). She suggests by contrast that shifting and multiple positionings – with the monster, his victims, and the surviving female heroine or 'Final Girl' - are available to male spectators through the narration of the story, and that horror is far more victim-identified than has previously been thought. She argues, for instance, that the hand-held camera work in the opening sequences - a convention used by critics to buttress arguments about identification with the aggressor - in fact aligns audiences with an unstable rather than powerful gaze, which moreover the 'Final Girl' appropriates in the final third of the film. (See also Lehman's analysis of rape-revenge films, 1993).

Where the gendered dynamics of horror are often absent from more sociological approaches, psychoanalytic ones tend to see them as the only relevant dimension, ignoring other themes such as generational or ethnic conflict. Claims that horror films, for instance, '*invariably* mobilise specific castration fantasies' (Neale 1980: 43, my emphasis) leave them open to charges of reductiveness. Whilst they see horror as historically conditioned by 'patriarchal and phallocentric ideology' (Creed), they only marginally locate it in specific contexts, times and social circumstances. They offer no or unreliable evidence that the actual audience is male (such as Clover's survey of video rentals) – although this is a consequence of their concern to progress arguments about masculinity and the power of the cinema in general, rather than to engage in qualitative research. Judith Halberstam argues that the notion that the films deal primarily with the 'horror of sex', that is too awful for men to look upon, makes violence legible only by translating it into sexual terms. They thus render 'the abject gaze, the gaze that consumes violence and gore as pleasure', theoretically inexplicable. She attributes this (citing Steven Shaviro) to an underlying humanism in psychoanalysis that believes that 'our desires are primarily ones for possession, plenitude, stability and reassurance' (1995: 154). She further argues that 'repression' models see sexuality and the unconscious as 'psychological universals', rather than as the *effect* of psychoanalysis's own historically and culturally specific 'technology of subjectivity', which *produces* a focus on gender and sexuality as key to monstrosity in modern horror (8-9).

Since they claim to identify fantasies that can only be represented in disguised forms, they do not deal comfortably with the self-conscious incorporation of psychoanalytic themes within texts themselves, which has been a feature of horror at least since *Psycho* (1960). Finally, psychoanalytic theory shares with ideological analysis a prioritisation of critics' readings over those of audiences, since the spectator is necessarily unaware of (his) unconscious processes. On such grounds, Barker and Brooks reject it altogether as both 'unverifiable' and as an unjust exercise of power, '*overthrowing* the ways audiences ordinarily talk about films' to substitute 'others derived from a general model' (1998: 141, their emphasis).

However, I would argue that psychoanalysis continues to be a useful tool for thinking through the relation between the social and the psychic. It raises questions of audience investment and pleasure that have been marginalised in other criticism (Kaplan 1986). Theorists who have drawn on the work of Laplanche and Pontalis see cinema as the mise en scene or setting of desire, in which the subject is 'caught up in the sequence of images', rather than in pursuit of a definite object or content (Laplanche and Pontalis 1986 (1964): 26). They thus present an image of a conflicted rather than one-dimensionally rational spectator. If monstrosity is not external, but already in us, some argue that it should be 'recognised and celebrated' for its ability to challenge 'discourses invested in purity and innocence' (Halberstam 1995). Such approaches are usefully able to reconsider aesthetic condemnation of 'gross' genres, for their circular and repetitive narratives, improbability, lack of psychological depth, infantile emotions and spectacular excesses. As Linda Williams remarks, these are 'moot as evaluation points if such features are intrinsic to their engagement with fantasy' (1991: 9). They shift debate away from whether violent images might cause actual violence; their function, Halberstam argues, is 'not to represent but to destabilize the real' (1993: 199), and as such they may be potentially progressive. Clover reads male audiences' preparedness to identify with female victims as a promising 'visible adjustment in the terms of gender representations' (Clover 1989: 127). Although she has little to say about the pleasures of violent fantasy for women audiences, her arguments have been developed in this direction by others (Halberstam 1993; Pinedo 1997).

Halberstam, for instance, defends films like *Thelma and Louise* (1991) and *Basic Instinct* (1992), arguing that their imagined fantasies of 'unsanctioned violences committed by subordinate groups upon powerful white men' may act as a 'strategy of revolt' that channels justified rage against oppression (187).

I would, however, draw attention to the ambivalence within this criticism about the content of representations. Although they challenge mimeticism and insist on the fluidity of spectatorial identifications, Pinedo and Halberstam's arguments are based on texts that reflect back an image of the same to the audience (e.g., show violence *by* women *to* women). They thus resemble, rather uncannily, the 'positive image' strategies of 1980s anti-sexist education, reading the Final Girl, for instance, as an empowering figure for women audiences. (As I will show, this is very much how Clover's work has been taken up within schools). Halberstam, in particular, seems uneasy about 'conventional TV and movie violence', that she describes as consisting ('of course') of acts 'perpetrated by powerful white men usually against women or people of color' to which the audience 'may even be immune' (191). There is surely a difficulty in reclaiming violence for marginalised groups whilst wanting to deny it to (ill-defined) dominant ones and such moves may close down the radical insights of theories of fantasy. Walkerdine's work on the meanings of *Rocky* remains an isolated example of an analysis that allows a mainstream film to serve metaphorical functions for a white working class man in the way Halberstam permits *Thelma and Louise* to do for women (Walkerdine 1986). Penley's analysis of the homoerotic 'slash fiction' produced by heterosexual women fans of *Star Trek* shows that fantasies can be written across the bodies of male characters. Imagining Kirk and Spock as both heterosexual and homosexual means the women can identify with - *be* - them as phallic and powerful, but at the same time still *have* them as sexual objects, since as heterosexual they are still available to them. Yet they do not represent women in their stories, nor call themselves 'feminists' (Penley 1992). The demand for a broader range of representations to be made available in popular culture is important politically, but Penley's work challenges, firstly, the idea that only then can they be useful for audiences. Secondly, however, it simultaneously suggests (extra-textually determined) limits to the positions

audiences are able to take up, even in fantasy (Thornham 1997: 100). This is an issue I will return to in my analysis of students' practical work.

In the classroom, I do not believe that students cannot learn *about* psychoanalytic readings of films, although there may be debate about the appropriate age at which they might be able to do so, and school teachers may feel unconfident about handling the discourse. The most interesting questions for teaching derive from the challenge psychoanalytic perspectives pose to the models of pedagogy discussed in Chapter One. As I noted in the Introduction, Felman argues that one cannot learn about psychic processes (of desire, fantasy, pleasure, identification and so on) merely by being given information about them. The analyst must take into account that, precisely because we are implicated in them, we may 'need not to know' about them. Learning, she suggests, depends less on the content of what is offered that on the structure of address between analyst and analysand, the positions from which both speak. Hence the teacher, like the therapist, must seek to learn from the unconscious knowledge of the student (as well as her own) and to reflect it back from a place that enables interpretation and understanding (Ellsworth 1997; Felman 1997 (1982)). I also want to borrow from Constantina Papoulias's analysis of Laplanche's work. In his emblematic image of acculturation, she notes, the baby suckling at the breast takes in not just nourishment, but also the fantasies of the adult carer. Since the latter are unconsciously transmitted, 'this is not a scene of abuse'. Further, they remain enigmatic; the child is excited by the obscure address of the subject, which requires interpretation as to its meaning (Papoulias 2000). In many of the accounts I have considered so far, the media are considered to be dangerous if not consciously abusive, socialising the audience through the content of the messages they purvey. Laplanche's work, by contrast, suggests an image that I will pursue in relation to the encounter both with the media and within the classroom: of a learning through seduction and incitement to interpret.

Horror Intertextuality and Inter-textuality

As Clover notes, horror 'talks about itself', about 'the psychology of its own production and consumption' to such an extent that it has been argued to be 'the most self-reflexive of cinematic genres' (1992: 168). In this respect, it can be seen as consciously pedagogic. Brophy argues that it is a 'genre about genre', (1986: 5). Barker's analysis of horror comics perceives involvement with them as 'coaching' the audience in appropriate ways of reading (1984). Carroll holds that the film characters' responses to the monster act as a guide to the audience (1990: 35). Halberstam refers to the 'overt didacticism' of *Nightmare on Elm Street*, claiming that it 'radically advocates for an active and aggressive spectatorship' of the sort the heroine uses to defeat Freddy (1995: 145-6). Fans, on this understanding, are skilled and competent, not passive or 'bombarded' by images with which they cannot cope. Critics commonly emphasise the importance of the 'insider knowledge' of conventions acquired by seasoned audiences, which enables them to read and play with the different levels of meaning in the text rather than responding only to its 'violent' content. Pleasure is provided through a combination of the films' transparency and predictability, and the innovations and surprises they deliver, especially through special effects or scenes of 'intense visual excitement' (Pinedo 1997: 45; Sconce 1993: 113). Audiences' involvement may take on the aura of a participatory game (Dika 1990), the cinematic equivalent of a rollercoaster ride, in which they are 'metaresponding' to their own revulsion (Carroll 1990: 193). This question of the pedagogy of horror itself, not teaching us what to think, but about genre and how to engage with the texts, is one to which I will return. It productively troubles approaches that see immersion as a source of problems rather than of learning, and is able to valorise 'formulaic' popular cultural genres. However, it prefers particular texts (slashers and the *Scream* or *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, for example) to more 'realist' ones (such as *Blair Witch Project* (1999)) and projects an image of audience mastery and distance rather than emotional involvement and empathy.

Inter-textual approaches move beyond the analysis of single films as self-contained objects, to the texts and practices which accompany them, such as

the star system, publicity, censorship, exhibition and reviewing (Mayne 1993: 64-8). These are seen as actively working to fragment and pluralise the text in order to maximise its audience and to create 'divergent' readings (Klinger 1989: 7). They therefore challenge arguments that mainstream commercial texts have a 'closed' narrative structure and limited polysemy in comparison to 'open' alternative or avant-garde texts, or that any decodings that differ from the critics' provide evidence of audience power and autonomy. Some writers have looked at, for example, the intersection of horror films and popular music, (Cooper 1997), or the merchandising associated with icons such as Freddy Kruger (Conrich 1997). Conrich's analysis still positions the audience as passive; the children who buy it, he asserts, 'have allowed themselves to be "possessed", not only by Freddy but by consumerism itself' (129). Linda Williams's more nuanced study of the marketing strategies for *Psycho* in 1960 shows how the gendered performance of affective responses could be socially regulated, but simultaneously opened to pleasurable transgressions (Williams 1994). Bennett's concept of 'reading formation' explains how meaning is 'activated' by readers according to the cultural sources available to them rather than 'encoded' in texts (Bennett 1983: 7). He displaces the privilege granted to academic interpretations, whilst noting that different apparatuses (schools, the press, etc) may 'superintend' readings. Mark Kermode's autobiographical account of how fanzines, film festivals and acquaintance with a 'heritage of genre knowledge' taught him to attend to texts in specific ways might be taken as a description of the 'reading formation' of the horror fan (1997). Whilst Kermode suggests that this gave him access to films' 'real' meaning, however, Bennett's view ultimately undermines the notion of distorted or inaccurate readings altogether. Any interpretation provides valid data if the aim is to explore how it was produced, rather than to evaluate its truth. Janet Staiger offers an example in relation to *Silence of the Lambs*, where she considers how readings of the film and of Jodie Foster's character Starling made the 'outing' of Foster credible at the time of the film's release (1993).

These adjustments to the object of study have filtered through into media education; the analysis of how posters construct expectations of genre films has become routine, and more extensive work on secondary materials in relation to

soap opera is now available (Grahame 1998). However, such approaches may treat the secondary text as unproblematic in a way that is denied to the primary text. The project of historical reception study itself seems subject to a fantasy of attaining a 'totalized view' of textual meaning; Klinger suggests that 'exhaustiveness, while impossible to achieve, is necessary as an ideal goal for historical research' (1997: 108). Derrida's work on the inevitable supplementarity of knowledge suggests that this is impossible (Usher and Edwards 1994: 129-132), and more pragmatically it might be daunting for teachers working to the constraints of classroom units of work. Critics working from this perspective rarely undertake empirical studies of audiences or consider the impact of actual sites and modes of consumption, and may thereby neglect affective responses in favour of cognitive interpretations.

Horror Audiences

The concept of 'audience' has been accorded an increasingly prominent role in media education. On the one hand, it is considered as part of industrial production – target marketing, its role in advertising – and read off the 'positions' texts offer. In this respect, students are encouraged to see their consumption as instrumental for media industries rather than individual and idiosyncratic, reflecting their membership of broader social categories. On the other, the concept has been part of a move away from 'text-centred' pedagogies, towards those where students are invited to reflect on their own use and distinctive readings of popular cultural material. Although Masterman, I argued, uses audience research to posit a gap between implied and 'real' spectators in which authenticity can be located, more processural models challenge such simple distinctions between culture and commerce. The media are seen instead as resources - essential, constitutive elements in audiences' capacities to make sense of the world (e.g.: Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994; Silverstone 1994; Silverstone 1999).

The problem media education faces is of how to make these everyday sense-making processes visible and debatable within the classroom. One solution has been to consider the findings of existing empirical work and for students to

conduct their own audience research projects. I explore in later chapters how teachers implemented these recommendations and how students responded to them. Here, I will briefly outline work that relates to horror audiences. I take a similar approach as in relation to texts: that is, that no research is able to deliver transparent truths about the 'real' audience. Even the decision to describe research participants in particular ways – in terms of their class or gender, for example – carries embedded assumptions about the factors that shape and influence their engagement with the media. Equally, choices of media forms or texts derive from a concern to pursue broader intellectual goals or debates. Most audience research has centred on television, for example, because as a domestic, everyday medium it offered a terrain on which the validity of textual semiotic approaches could be challenged (O'Shea 1989). Feminists, as Tasker notes, have often focused on 'female' genres such as soap opera or the romance, in response to 'subculture' theory's devaluation of 'feminised' mass culture. It has therefore inadvertently acted as a block to analysing 'non-conformist' consumption by women, such as their involvement with 'male' genres (or indeed men's with 'female') (Skelton and Valentine 1998: 17; Tasker 1991). In relation to horror and violent media, research is inevitably overdetermined by popular discourses of moral panics and 'effects', and I will focus my analysis on the consequences of the research for public sphere debates (cf Ang 1996).

There is relatively little quantitative work on horror audiences, due in part to the problems of gathering data. What surveys there are tend to be sponsored by major studios, but since much horror has been produced independently, its audiences are particularly under-analysed. Video rental statistics are also hidden from view, despite concerns about children's access to horror films in this form. Some research projects have relied on children's self-reported viewing, which produces highly compromised findings, as was seen in the case of research into 'video nasties' (Barlow and Hill 1985; Hill 1983)[2]. An exception is Docherty et al, who supply statistical evidence that correlates the popularity of horror with younger, working class audiences who consider their jobs

[2] Hill's 1983 report was launched with a massive press fanfare, claiming that 40% of Britain's under 16s and 37% of under 7s had seen a 'video nasty'. The research relied on children ticking which they had seen of a list of titles, and was seriously questioned when it was repeated including fabricated titles - finding that many children claimed to have seen non-existent films. (For a more detailed account of this controversy, see Brown 1984). Other research has been more circumspect in acknowledging the 'social desirability' factor in children's self-reporting (Cantor and Reilly 1982; Sparks 1986b).

monotonous. They interpret this as meaning that horror offers a limited release from frustration, 'an example of the subtlety of social control' which effectively confirms such people in their subordinate place in the social hierarchy (Docherty, Morrison, and Tracey 1987: 117). Such unconvincingly large claims justify criticisms that quantitative research is unable to deliver satisfying answers to the question of what is gained from viewing choices.

Psychological research is, as we have seen, the dominant paradigm shaping the anti-violence education projects of Chapter One, and it tends explicitly to construct the audience as sites for medical or other intervention and regulation. For instance, the work of Sparks, Cantor and others on children's encounter with 'scary' media material challenges hypotheses that audiences become increasingly desensitised to such material (Cantor and Oliver 1996; Cantor and Reilly 1982; Cantor and Sparks 1984; Hoffner and Cantor 1991; Sparks 1986b; Sparks and Cantor 1986). However, Sparks writes that such research may provide 'insight into how to *prevent and treat* severe emotional reactions of children who are exposed to certain images before they are able to cope effectively with them' (Sparks 1986a: 65, my emphasis). Uses and gratifications research, based on a model in which individuals choose types of content according to pre-existing rational and emotional needs or motives, claims to be neutral, aiming merely to increase knowledge of 'what sorts of people like horror' and the ability to predict human behaviour. However, they confirm dominant discourses by framing horror viewing as a paradox or problem that needs to be explained (Tamborini and Stiff 1987: 416). Scales and inventories used to measure personality types or attributes of horror viewers, such as 'sensation seeking', 'Machiavellianism' (Tamborini, Stiff, and Zillmann 1987) or the 'Mean-Spirited Scale' (Oliver 1993), reveal a pathological conception of the audience, as either compensating for the inadequacies of their lives, or disturbed and suspect. Such research has little sense of subjects as having complex experiences or ambivalent attitudes towards the activities they are asked about. Sparks, for instance, claims to be able to predict liking for horror on the basis of a ten-point 'Enjoyment of Frightening Films' scale (1986a). However, questions such as 'I don't enjoy the feeling of being frightened when I watch a scary film' are impossible to answer (even on a scale of 1-5) without

reference to context of viewing (alone at home? in a cinema with friends?). Nor would an affirmative answer necessarily imply that subjects would avoid horror in the future, as he assumes. Researchers take social categories as stable apriori variables, so that gender, in particular, is consistently delivered as a source of differences rather than as the effect of viewing practices or of the survey methods used. For instance, Tamborini and Stiff asked respondents to choose from five statements about reasons for liking horror. They found that females liked horror 'for the just endings', and males for the 'destruction' often shown, concluding that men more quickly become callous to graphic violence (Tamborini and Stiff 1987). However, since they also note that many modern horror films do not in fact have satisfying or just resolutions, it is unclear why women would choose this option, unless it seemed to be more 'humane' and 'moral' (and hence gender-appropriate). The most that can be concluded is that, in the context of such research, men are more willing than women to position themselves as hardened to the suffering of others and able to enjoy the violent and shocking aspects of horror. (Potter and Wetherell discuss the problems of 'restriction strategies' in eliminating variability of response, 1987; see also Henriques et al. 1984).

In another project, Tamborini et al note a link between some men's enjoyment of porn and preference for films featuring female victims rather than male, out of a set of film outlines they were asked to choose to watch (Tamborini, Stiff, and Zillmann 1987). They suggest (albeit tentatively) that this might indicate that 'sexually frustrated men with feelings of hostility against women will prefer female-victimising horror for the gratification derived from seeing the pain and suffering of those causing their frustrations' (550). This conclusion rests on a number of unexplored assumptions - that male viewers are identifying with the aggressor rather than the victim, that pornography usage is a symptom of sexual frustration, that hostility to women is a localised phenomenon in particular men and so on. Equally disturbingly, it covertly raises the question of which needs or gratifications might be dysfunctional and should therefore be disallowed (see Elliott 1974 for this point).

The problems of such research are partly methodological. However, as we will see, classroom work often departs from similar common-sense perceptions of 'the audience' as a group of serialised individuals who possess core, unchanging characteristics that will be displayed whatever the situation, and can be isolated into distinct 'viewer types'. Moreover, Ang has noted that the distinction between 'mainstream' and 'critical' audience research can no longer be made on the basis of methodology alone, as both increasingly use 'ethnographic' approaches such as group and individual interviews, participant observation and so on (1996). This makes it all the more important to assess research for the political intervention it makes. Browne and Pennell, for instance, used a range of techniques in their work on video violence and young offenders, such as interviews, screening films and discussing reactions to them (Browne and Pennell 1998). Yet the outcome is to sustain fears about 'effects'. For instance, they report without explicit comment that one interviewee said that he thought that cutting the Achilles tendon of a victim to stop him escaping (in a film called *Last Gasp*) was 'a good idea'. The context of the research invites the interpretation that this is an omen of his likely actions. I return to this report in Chapter Six.

Nor is 'critical' research free from implication in the web of power, knowledge and desire (Walkerdine 1986). Meredith Cherland carried out a school-based ethnographic study of the reading materials and everyday lives of 11 and 12 year old girls (Cherland 1993; Cherland 1994). It bears out Frith's comment that audience research is not incompatible with pessimistic, Frankfurt-school analyses of mass culture, and may simply seek 'redeeming' features in the audience rather than the product (Frith 1991: 103). She describes teenage and romance fiction such as the *Baby-Sitters Club* books in disparaging terms, as an 'easily produced commodity' 'peddled' to a 'lucrative market' (Cherland 1993: 31). They 'do not seek to promote social revolution', since they portray 'good girls' who 'beautify themselves diligently, do their chores conscientiously, love their families well, and serve the children of their community faithfully'. However, she claims that the girls read them against this grain, in ways that supported their desire for agency and independence. They saw the baby-sitters 'making money that they then used to achieve their own ends ... shaping the action

around them so that things worked out the way they wanted them to... acting as agents in their own right' (32). Naturally, she is left with the disappointing problem that the 'great majority' of her subjects were nonetheless 'growing up to keep their places in the gender hierarchy and did not attempt to subvert the social order' (36). She attributes this to their consumption of horror films such as *Nightmare on Elm Street* and fiction such as Virginia Andrews's *Flowers in the Attic*, which teach them that 'women should get back in line' (38). She bases this claim on the kinds of textual analysis that Clover rightly challenges. For instance, that slashers consist of 'sex and violence', akin to 'the most extreme hard-core pornography' (41) and show only 'male aggressors who seek female victims' (37), such that men would 'be able to find pleasure in the feelings of power and dominance and gratification that come to the horror protagonist', but that for women 'it would be much easier to identify with (the victim's) helplessness' (40). She concludes that the girls' reading '*worked against their own best interests*... They became, in all likelihood, less able to act upon their desires for agency' (43, my emphasis). Since it is circulated both between the girls and between the girls and their mothers, women would seem to be primarily responsible for perpetuating their own subordination. One logical consequence could well be censorship of such material, for girls' own good; it is relevant to my later arguments to note that Bronwyn Davies bases her claims for the liberating potential of feminist pedagogies on just such perceptions of gendered relations to texts (Davies 1993). A degree of self-reflexivity might have enabled Cherland to acknowledge the projection that produces her subjects as proto-feminists in her own image and damns horror as the 'bad object' against the reclaimed good one of teen fiction.

Other approaches, by contrast, valorise both texts and audiences. Charles Sarland studied young people's responses to a range of fiction, including horror, in a school context (1991). He offers sympathetic analyses of boys' investments in violence; he writes that '*First Blood*, and material like it, actually represents the experiences and feelings of what it is like to be at the bottom of the pile, both in school and in society at large' (47). Locating positive values in material often dismissed by teachers and suggesting that censorship amounts to a refusal by dominant groups to address the legitimate grievances it articulates, has

important pedagogical and political implications. Yet if texts reflect identities, they are rendered passive and inert; it is not entirely clear in what ways it actually matters what people read or watch, which Silverstone argues is a key issue for audience research (1994: 132). Social markers that Sarland himself specifies (class or gender rather than ethnicity or sexuality) are seen as the central factors generating interpretations; he does not ask students how they themselves define their identities, or consider contexts of consumption and of the research. His refusal to engage with the question of fantasy produces ideal and non-contradictory readers; he claims that there are 'specifically female readings' (31), as if girls read only *as* girls. Similar criticisms apply to Annette Hill's work on fans of 'violent' movies (Hill 1997). Her metaphor of the 'portfolios of interpretation' they bring to the cinema offers an image of responsible viewing and stresses their consciously developed and applied hermeneutic abilities rather than irrational, uncontrolled or ambivalent emotional responses.

Barker and Brooks's research on audiences for the science fiction / action film *Judge Dredd* (1995) makes a more interesting attempt to understand how practices of cinema going, and choices of particular texts, might develop and consolidate identities (Barker and Brooks 1998). They see texts not as sources of influence, but as inviting particular modes of participation, which enables them also to account for the sensuous pleasures of spectacular cinema, which is primarily a group experience. They emphasise the importance of the contexts of consumption, such as the social geographies of cinemas and the different pleasures and uses different media offer particular groups of viewers. Although they draw on different theoretical traditions, their concept of 'SPACE' ('Site for the Production of Active Cinematic Experience') or 'orientations' to the film is similar to Bennett's 'reading formation' insofar as it concerns the systems of inter-textual references that activate attention to texts in particular ways. So for instance, audiences who draw on the 'Sylvester Stallone' SPACE relate *Judge Dredd* to Stallone's other films, merchandising of his star image and fan writings rather than reviews, which often 'misunderstand' Stallone from fans' perspective. Those who inhabit the '2000 AD' SPACE connect it to the comics on which it is based rather than to other films, and to fan interpretations of them (as about totalitarianism, Americanisation, etc.) that may not be available to non-fans.

They thus validate such informal and unofficial knowledge, rather than seeing it as lacking and in need of correction.

However, they are less concerned with interpreting *Judge Dredd* than the interview transcripts; their analysis of the film is little more than a synopsis (214-216). Their discrediting of psychoanalysis, noted above, privileges what 'real' readers do and claims moral and political superiority over elitist critics. Yet if audiences are already capable of producing a wide range of meanings from texts, which do not coincide with those of textual criticism, the purpose of the latter – particularly for teachers who remain committed to what it can offer - becomes unclear. Criticism surely has a legitimate role in generating debate about issues beyond the text proper (as psychoanalytic approaches do about the nature of masculinity). As I suggested above, it might make more sense to consider its functions for student subjectivity than to exclude it altogether.

Further, as the title of the book suggests, the audiences they construct are 'knowing', who even when taking pleasure in spectacular films are making rational choices rather than being blindly seduced. Such claims are clearly important insofar as they disrupt the 'violent movie, violent fan' equations of popular discourse. However, perhaps as a consequence, they problematise 'public' identities such as class and race and oversimplify 'private' ones connected to gender and sexuality. For instance, they hold that futuristic films may act a resource for 'critical political imaginings' that express what they call 'group awareness' (291), or implicit class-consciousness, yet also describe them as offering the pleasure of 'enjoying being your gender and seeing it performed on screen' (157). I must confess to a degree of incredulity at the notion that Stallone as Judge Dredd simply 'performs' the already-constituted masculinity of their 14-15 year-old schoolboy interviewees. They further write admiringly that 'Boys like this know their way around their world well. They know which cinemas are best – not just for sound, and rocking seats, but for the entire experience of popcorn, foyer, girls, pizza, sports shoe shop et al.' (276). One might wonder whose interests are served when they thus collusively objectify girls as part of what boys consume at the cinema (ranking them, moreover, somewhat below a box of popcorn).

Whilst they acknowledge that talking about films is a fundamental part of the pleasures they offer, they are less reflexive about the types of social performance provoked by the interview context itself. For example, they prioritise ethnicity as the relevant factor shaping the readings of a group of young black men, and only mention at the end of the chapter that one of them was a former student of Barker's (269). But talking about 'race and representation' in mainstream cinema may construct oneself as sophisticated and 'critical', particularly where one is aware that listeners would be sympathetic. They also accept at face value the same ex-student's story about mocking the 'drag queen' film *To Wong Foo*, analysing it as a rational choice to turn 'ironic viewer' in order to gain pleasure from a self-evidently 'bad' film (262-3). An account more sensitive to context (an all-male group of interviewers and a female interviewee) might draw attention to the defensiveness of the account given and how it acts to confirm his own heterosexuality. (Although it might then be less likely to win the 'overwhelming' endorsement they claim he gave theirs).

David Buckingham and Gemma Moss comment explicitly on methodological issues and the pedagogical implications of their research into horror (Buckingham 1996; Moss 1993). For both, the contexts of viewing and subsequent talk about it are a key factor in the meaning of the experience, and moreover are a crucial means of learning. Moss notes that children often based their statements about horror on very little knowledge of actual films - drawing instead on such sources as posters, trailers, conversations with friends and parents – and did not agree about what horror was. Their definitions depended on the particular texts available to them and how they were related to each other (for instance, they discussed a range of non-horror texts and real events that they classified as 'scary'). Talk therefore constituted the meaning of horror rather than reflecting it, also enabling children to identify their relationship to the text, and their place in the audience (Moss) or to 'regulate their own viewing and the emotional responses to it' (Buckingham: 130). On this basis, Buckingham argues for 'a more constructive *educational* approach, that empowers children and parents to make informed decisions on their own behalf' (16). Moss sketches out what an 'audience-centred' and talk-based pedagogy might look

like in the classroom. She recommends, for instance, building on what children know about horror already, by raising questions about who watches horror (or refuses to), in what contexts, where information about horror has been obtained, what counts as horror and for whom. Social patterns that emerge from answers to these questions (for instance, in relation to gender) would show students how their use of such media texts serves to 'structure social relations and pervade(s) identity politics' (180). In this change of focus from the film 'object' to the film 'subject' (Petro 1994), the aim of media education becomes 'social self-understanding' rather than knowledge *about* texts (as others have also argued; Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994; Richards 1998). In the case of her male interviewees, Moss claims their central concern is whether they count as 'child' or 'adult' members of the audience, and that this is patterned by gender in particular – although we might note the influence of an interviewer who clearly disliked horror.

However, the move towards more processural pedagogies of 'everyday' life itself, as Bennett comments, takes place in an institutional context marked by 'a governmental interest in the cultural aspects of population management and regulation' (Bennett 1993: 227). It does not simply offer a more 'real' or 'liberating' engagement with the audience. The notion of talk as a social performance suggests that we should pay careful attention to the contexts in which it operates, its specific sites of production and consumption, particularly the language games of the classroom (Morgan 1996). What students say will be mediated by their understanding of the supervisory discourses of the school, of socially circulated expectations held by both teachers and other students, of the familiar discursive positions horror offers (the marauding sadist, the movie geek, the fan 'in the know', etc) and by their willingness to become 'objects' of teachers' interpretation.

Further, whilst talk about media texts does indicate the cultural frames of reference through which audiences account for their experiences and interpretations, it is poorly placed to explore unconscious pleasures, identifications and fantasies mobilised in the viewing process. Julian Wood's participant observation study of six 14 year old boys watching *Stephen King's It*

(1993) offers an interesting contrast to Barker and Brooks's interview-based work. He explores how the film 'connects with their experience' (189) by dealing with mid-teen outcast characters, but notes the 'conflicting subject positions' (190) they take up in relation to scenes that invite both their identification with a male character who strikes a woman, and with her subsequent self-assertion. He draws out contradictions between the boys' response to the text (for instance, jeering at the male-bonding scenes) and the viewing context (in which the boys mirrored the 'on-screen cuddles' by sitting close to one another (191)).

In the classroom, a production-based and 'audience-centred' paradigm of media education has been offered as an alternative to Masterman's 'demystificatory' pedagogy. Asking students to construct representations within genres with which they are familiar enables them to bring their unofficial, informal interests into the curriculum and potentially to explore the 'private' domain of their own affective engagement. The UCLES (now OCR) syllabus, as mentioned in the previous chapter, has placed a strong emphasis on practical productions as an assessed part of course work from the beginning of the A-Level course. Writers such as Buckingham have drawn on the work of Vygotsky to emphasise the social nature of learning from the media and in the classroom, and thus the importance of dialogue with peers and with the teacher (Vygotsky 1978; Vygotsky 1986). Students apply the tools of analysis developed within Cultural Studies to their work, or speak about the media from different subject positions (as researchers or evaluators, for instance), to promote reflection and critical distance, or 'translation' between different language modes (practical and academic). Buckingham and Sefton-Green sketch out a 'three-stage process' of media learning thus:

> it involves students making their existing knowledge explicit; it enables them to render that knowledge systematic, and to generalise from it; and it also encourages them to question the basis of that knowledge, and thereby to extend and move beyond it. At each stage, this is seen as a collaborative process: through the encounter both with their peers and with the academic knowledge of the teacher, students gradually acquire greater control over their own thought processes
>
> (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994: 148; for other accounts, see Buckingham 1986; Buckingham 1990; Buckingham 1993; Buckingham, Grahame, and Sefton-Green 1995).

I refer to this as an 'emergent paradigm' of media education, and in later empirical chapters, explore its potential in more detail.

Conclusion

Although none of the approaches considered here offer unproblematic reflections of the horror text, I will tend to focus in this thesis on those that are most usefully problematic for classroom work. Horror's interest for pedagogy may lie, not in its profundity – its one, deep, graspable meaning – but in its complexity. There is no single perspective within which all the analyses of horror discussed here can cohere and consensus about its meaning can be reached. The larger and greedier the claims made by textual theories to be comprehensive, the more they omit, whether film conventions or sub-genres or audience understandings. Each account that tells us that horror is 'invariably' and 'essentially' about castration fears, adolescent traumas, the nature of capitalism, category mistakes or sexual difference, excludes the other and offers incommensurable and sometimes irreconcilable levels of analysis. Indeed, they simply establish predictability of the sort that horror thrives on overturning. Further, they may fail to engage with the particular pleasures of violence. Analyses that situate contemporary horror as an example of postmodern hybrid culture challenge the confident hierarchies of art versus entertainment, high and low, great drama or political comment and commercial product that still hold sway in the school. It is also likely to be known better (and certainly differently) by young people than by teachers; it raises the possibility of a genuine generation gap in tastes, viewing preferences and styles. The self-consciousness of the films about who is watching them how, where and why, also challenges pedagogies that try to deliver answers to those questions as though audiences are 'innocent' consumers. However, audience-centred approaches that attempt to capture the social practices and discourses through which both texts and identities are constituted must reckon both with the institutional space of the school and the ways in which the horror audience has already been made speakable within public debates.

Chapter Three - Methodology

> *Educational institutions and the mass media are essentially rivals .... (They) rest on two irreconcilable principles: on the one hand the spectacle, with its facility, superficiality, passivity and illusion of effortless learning, and on the other the training process which implies effort, depth, the solidity of real learning and activity. Lastly the most fundamental clash is between two orders of faculties: the school gives priority to reason and logic, while in the media imagination and the senses reign supreme.*
>
> *(Souchon 1984)*

> *'I know such texts exist and that children watch them', exclaimed one teacher in a training workshop, after I had screened an extract from Friday the 13th (1980) in which, as another argued, a woman character 'had her throat slit like a pig', 'but does that mean we have to bring them into our classroom?'*
>
> *Research Diary Notes*

> *Martin Barker's contacts with a local teacher resulted in four interesting focus groups of young media studies pupils – whose orientation to the film turned out to have almost nothing to do with their taking media studies*
>
> *(Barker and Brooks 1998: 20)*

Why horror?

The dominant discourses of media education considered in Chapter One tell their own horror story about contemporary society. Apocalyptic descriptions of media 'manipulation', 'domination', 'bombardment', 'glut', 'flood' and so on conceptualise the media as a monster – a destructive and overwhelming force that is profoundly 'other'. The source of its threat is held to reside primarily in the truth status and power of its meanings and messages, although its seductiveness may also be acknowledged. Children figure initially in this narrative as victims, helpless innocents powerless to resist or cope with the culture that surrounds them. As they pass into adolescence, however, they may become monstrous in their turn. Driven by 'base appetite' and instinct, taken over and hardened by the media, they lose the ability to appreciate subtleties of human emotion, to distinguish reality from fantasy, good from bad – or, in more political versions of the story, propaganda from truth. These images have been applied generally to media audiences - the 'TV zombies' – but most consistently to those for horror and other 'violent' or spectacular fictional forms. The educator stars in this narrative as the older, wiser, expert hero, who will come to the rescue in the final frames and provide a happy ending that will restore justice

and right thinking. The tools of combat s/he holds are those of reason and knowledge, which, once passed on, will shield victims throughout their lives. Some tellers inflect the story in national and mythic terms, with media education as a St. George who reclaims 'merrie England' from the Hollywood dragon - if only we knew what 'England' was.

By contrast, some of the critics considered in Chapter Two argue that this is a tale told by an older generation – if indeed it ever had the power to capture the attention of an audience. Their tellings focus instead on contemporary horror's young, 'everyday' victim-hero who rescues himself, or more particularly, herself, rather than waits for the expert to do so. Her weapons are rarely specialised; not guns, but whatever comes immediately to hand in the – often domestic rather than exotic - circumstances she finds herself in: a knitting needle, a coat hanger... Her most significant tools, however, are the knowledge, vision and power she already possesses. She fights the monster by being close rather than distanced, by thinking and seeing as he does, and when she locates reserves of violence within herself in order to oppose him, she learns in the process that they are not so different. Audiences may take up different roles as they listen; they may play along with victims but also with monsters, may enter the story wholeheartedly, but also remain detached. Many storytellers also remark that familiarity with the monster – the genre - itself may make it manageable, offering the chance to decide whether or not to venture into its lair, and to find one's way around it once inside. The format of this tale is that of the shaggy dog story; we can be sure that the battle is not over yet, that the monster will rise again, and again... Moreover, those who gather round to hear it might be seeking to engage with each other not the story itself. Participating in the ritual of being horrified together draws us closer, reminds us that we are not atomised, unique individuals, but like each other, not too strange to one another.

The second version of the media horror story suggests audiences can already save themselves – that they have developed strategies for handling media 'saturation' in their lives (Collins 1995: 35). It encourages us to ask what our attitude to contemporary culture should be, what kinds of frameworks it offers for making sense of cultural space and identity. Yet it leaves unanswered the question of what role education might have in this process. As the first quotation

at the start of the chapter suggests, the values of education and of the media are often held to be profoundly opposed. The school is a modernist institution, which values rationality and bodies of knowledge. It envisages learning as hard work, and focuses on the development of the individual towards greater autonomy and critical distance, from both texts and others. It is ill equipped to deal with the pleasures of the spectacular, excessive, engaged and participatory or indeed may feel that it should not, as does the teacher in the second quotation. Yet if it does not do so, as Barker's research suggests, it may simply become (or remain) irrelevant to youth audiences' concerns. This raises a further series of questions. Can we learn where we feel and care, where we are committed and involved rather than detached? Can immersion in a culture be a route to understanding it? If pedagogy no longer justifies itself by the emancipation it offers, what grounds are there for judging one form as better than another? If it is to cultivate desire, invite us to be something more than who we are, rather than threaten us with what we are missing, in what senses can it still be critical?

Horror focuses these questions in productive ways. Pedagogies that centre on undermining the mimetic authority of texts or the 'message' they convey are already redundant in relation to horror; we cannot challenge what people 'believe' to be true about it, since its credibility is already low, or at least not agreed. Horror is more often hyper-real than realist or anti-realist, in that its images and narratives gain their meaning and impact from their relation to others rather than to an external reality that can be assessed and known. This relational aspect of horror, I will argue, should encourage us to question also the relations and networks we establish in the classroom. Textual analysis may not offer the secure ground we seek, a single order of discourse that will force the text to yield up its secrets. If interpretation is performative, what meanings and what identities, do we and should we aim to create? – And what kind of a setting is the classroom and how might it discipline the stories we are prepared to tell?

Nor is it clear how we may evaluate it, or who has the right to do so. Horror calls on the theatrical and the psychic, not the logical and literal. If we value only texts that meet criteria drawn from humanist, realist aesthetics founded on goal-driven linear narratives, character development, complexity, coherence, probability and moral consequence, we may miss out on what makes horror work. Moreover, the

privilege accorded to traditional authority figures to deliver cultural judgements may have been challenged. Where can education go if it is not focused on transmitting a valuable content?

Instead, it is horror's power to move (whether to fear, disgust, desire, exhilaration, laughter and so on) that is central to its appeal, and this cannot necessarily be captured within rational dialogue – indeed, explaining why it does may well be antithetical to 'getting' it. To teach it means we have to believe that we can offer something better than the experience of watching it. Its register is multiple; it may require us to respond with involvement and concern, but also with distance and irony. Can our pedagogical address in the classroom be as flexible? If horror reflects already on what we want to teach students about it - the processes of consumption and production, for instance - where should our own critique be directed? What questions can we ask that it has not already posed?

At the same time, knowledge of horror is not a purely subcultural affair. Analysts of postmodernism have argued that contemporary culture has fragmented media experiences that were formerly collective, targeting products to niche audiences in a way that divides rather than unites us. It is true that the specialised knowledge of horror fans may produce readings that differ from those of less committed audiences, that some horror films may be a minority taste and that there may be generation differences in predilections for the visceral and gory. However, horror's general narrative forms and images belong to all of us, and no one is innocent of them. Like the romance, they surround us throughout our lives, in fairy stories, songs and novels, appear in domesticated forms as 'Monster Munch' in a bag of crisps or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* on television as well as in the more rarefied atmosphere of the cinema. They are a part of our common culture, providing resources through which we may understand ourselves, our experience, and public issues (as the vampire figure 'haunts' debates about Aids, or Frankenstein those about genetically modified foods).

The parameters of the problematic this thesis addresses are how the questions raised by Cultural Studies about both texts and audiences can encourage us to rethink pedagogy - the processes of knowledge production and the nature of

learning. To find answers we need to develop, not more 'fundamental principles', but a 'clearer view of the messy reality', as Hunter suggests (1996: 7). Those I provide here derive from qualitative empirical case studies of the teaching of horror in schools, which stress contextual, local, specific understandings created in the variable circumstances of everyday classroom life. I present my arguments in a mode that is more evocative than evaluative, aiming to develop complex ways of seeing rather than a complete picture and to encourage readers to think about their own *implication* in knowledge production and processes, rather than more scientistic notions of knowledge *application.* However, I also want to avoid over-theorising my work to such an extent that it is no longer clear what one does or could do in the classroom. The common sense discourse of Media Studies as trendy and irrelevant makes it all the more important to engage with legitimate questions about how to teach it, how young people learn from, with and about the media, and how teachers can evaluate their work.

An outline of the research: what I did

In the Introduction, I described the earliest stages of my work and how it fed into my formulation of research questions. During my full-time research, I carried out four case studies in two schools and in this section I sketch out background context and my methodological approach. Both schools were mixed 11-18 comprehensives that came under the same Education Authority, but were in contrasting locations in outer London. The school considered in Chapter Four was a popular one, with an expanding sixth form, and had received a recent positive OFSTED report commenting on its 'significant strengths' and 'racial harmony'. Its intake was about 70% ethnic minority, including both Asian and Jewish students and it was in a broadly middle class area. (A fuller description of the ethnic and gender composition of the groups I observed is contained in Appendix II). The teacher I observed, Geoff, was white and in his 40s. He had taught at the school since 1980, and had been a Senior Teacher since 1986, dealing with careers interviews, PSE and other pastoral duties. His academic background was in English, and he was taking a part-time Media and Film MA, which he passed with a distinction in 1999. He established the Media Studies department in 1988 and now shared the A-Level classes with the Head of

Department. Since location, equipment and even room decoration may construct a sense of the discipline (and of its value in the eyes of the institution) for students, it is worth noting that the department occupied the first floor of a relatively new block built in 1993-4. Between the period of my first and second observations (1997 and 1998), it upgraded its equipment significantly, acquiring a larger TV monitor for screenings, more cameras and a second computer-based editing suite. However, practical work was not a major emphasis of the course. The walls in the classrooms were covered mainly with found images from the media – film posters, star images, advertisements and newspaper articles – rather than students' productions. This may have reflected the teachers' own preferences and areas of confidence, the influence of the NEAB A-Level syllabus which the department had followed since 1994, and the lack of technical support within the school itself, which was instead bought in sporadically from a local Drama Centre.

The other school was in the centre of a satellite housing estate built in the late 1930s and 40s, and was considerably less accessible by public transport. The students were mostly white (with an ethnic minority school population of 15-17%) and working class. It was known locally as something of a 'sink school', despite a positive OFSTED report between my two observations (in 1996 and 1998). The teacher, Kate, was white and in her late 20s. She had arrived at the school in 1993 as Head of Department, and managed an ever-changing staff recruited from other departments to help particularly with GCSE teaching. She came from an academic background in Communications and Sociology, and had trained to teach English and Media Studies with David Buckingham (my supervisor) at the Institute of Education in the early 1990s. The sixth form was proportionately smaller, and Media Studies was one of its most popular options. Just before my first observation, the department had moved from a hut on the playground to a large room in the main body of the school, with an analogue editing suite at the back of the class. By 1998, Kate had obtained funding for additional still image digital cameras. Displays of students' work around the school corridors emphasised the importance given to the production element of the course - Kate had previously taught alongside the Chief Examiner for the UCLES Production Paper. Students followed the UCLES modular A-Level syllabus.

The two contexts provided contrasts, particularly in terms of class, which have been argued to be a factor in shaping the meaning media texts have for young people (Murdock and Phelps 1973) and of horror in particular. The age, gender and media tastes of the two teachers also provided points of comparison. However, I have analysed these aspects of identity as they were made relevant, rather than assuming that they pre-determine responses.

My formal and social contacts were primarily with other classroom teachers. Both the teachers and I engaged in a certain amount of subterfuge when it came to mentioning the subject of my research to senior managers, referring to it as a general study of media teaching rather than of horror. However, management could not have been unaware of Kate's teaching, since a selection of student-made horror video covers was exhibited in the entrance lobby of the school. (These occasioned, as a story went, a school assembly in which visiting Christian speakers condemned them as evidence of a thriving local satanic culture...). I followed the policy of the department on film exhibition: one teacher wrote to all parents to inform them that students might be watching 18 certificate films (without any comeback), the other did not. Some justification for using such films in educational contexts with older students has been provided by James Ferman as Director of the British Board of Film Classification (Bragg and Grahame 1997), and Buckingham's research has shown that many parents consider teenagers to be capable of making their own decisions (1996).

I observed between eight and thirteen weeks of teaching in each case study, although Kate's horror course took up all the weekly lessons and Geoff's two of four. In class, I sat at the back or the side of the room and did not participate; when I did get involved in commenting on students' productions, I did not always feel this was helpful, as I explain in Chapter Six. My marginality was useful in that students may have talked to me in a way they would not have done to a teacher, and in lessons I was occasionally privy to comments that the teacher would not have heard. I audiotaped all classes, transcribed them, and kept diary notes on other conversations and encounters. (A guide to transcription notations is contained in Appendix I). I collected all Kate's students' practical work and commentaries, but it proved difficult to collect essays from Geoff's students. I have corrected students' spelling and grammar unless mistakes seemed

particularly relevant to meaning. Presenting uncorrected versions risks underlining the gap of power and educational level between students and myself; in INSET workshops it often produced readings based on common sense assumptions about 'ability' and 'intelligence'.

I was introduced to the students as someone who was a former teacher now doing research at the Institute of Education, who was interested in horror and in what they thought of it. If asked further about my work, I tended to explain it in terms of debates about media education as an 'alternative' to censorship. I collected questionnaires on media usage and family background, etc, from all participants and asked the teachers about their aims and objectives throughout my observation. I carried out informal interviews with students in small friendship groups, before and after the horror course. In the first, I asked them to talk generally about what media they liked and what they thought about horror films and novels; the second focused on their evaluation of the course. All students participated voluntarily in these; I would question the extent to which they felt able to refuse my requests, but since most took place over lunch, attendance required a certain commitment on their part. Once I realised the importance of the 'micro-economy' of research (Hey 1996) and started to supply chocolate, biscuits and drinks, the interviews became notably more relaxed and lengthier. Although I was initially stiff and awkward, chasing an ideal of researcher objectivity, I later tried to be more open and engaged, expressing my own opinions and reactions. According to some accounts, my interviewing style would therefore be part of a feminist praxis, in which such reciprocity and human feeling will minimise status differences and treat respondents as equals (Oakley 1981; Reinharz 1992). Fontana and Frey suggest that being 'real' makes interviewing 'more honest, morally sound and reliable' (1998: 67-8). I myself am highly cynical about these arguments. If I 'disclosed' that I, too, liked violence and gore, or had found a particular film upsetting, I did so for tactical reasons – to challenge students' assumptions about me and what they could tell me, for instance - that were as objectifying and manipulative as traditional methods have been charged with. I was however uneasy about their willingness to submit to my 'gaze' without knowing what I would do with the data they gave me. An example is that students in the first phase of the research were most insistent that I use their real names in my writing, which I was initially hesitant to do.

However, when I contacted Lauren about an article I was to publish about her work (Bragg forthcoming), she specifically requested that I use her real name rather than the pseudonym I had chosen. I have therefore done so for all students, but have generally only referred to them by their first names. In the later phase of the research, I asked students to choose their own alternative names.

The institutional school environment frames all the types of data I collected. Thus, although I have used what are often seen as 'ethnographic' approaches such as participant observation and unstructured interviews, this is not an ethnographic study. My involvement with students and teachers did not have the length, intensity and variety of locations that others have argued are necessary for research to be defined as such (Gillespie 1995: 54-5; Nightingale 1989; Skeggs 1994: 73). (Although see Moores 1993, for a more generous use of the term). What emerged from this data was not a triangulation (Cohen and Mannion 1994: 233; Denzin 1989) that achieves a smooth narrative about a 'reality' that can be definitively known, but something more akin to what Laurel Richardson has described as a 'crystal' structure (1998), or a range of viewpoints and constructions. How students depicted their media tastes and responses to horror (and thus themselves) in interviews, in the classroom, and in written and practical work, or how teachers presented their aims and what they actually did, in each case revealed tensions and differences that proved important to the arguments I offer.

I observed existing practice in the first phase of my research, and in the second I worked with both teachers to devise an amended unit of work, although they implemented it and adapted my suggestions. I explain the precise nature of the changes in subsequent chapters, but in each case my general aim was to pursue the question of how to develop more 'audience-centred' and 'everyday life' pedagogies. This structure of the research brings it closer to the tradition of critical educational 'action research' or 'reflective practice' than ethnography or Cultural Studies. (On action research, see also: Bryant 1996; Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1996; Ebbutt 1985; Grundy 1982; Hopkins 1993; Kelly 1985; Noffke 1997; Schon 1983; Stenhouse 1975; Winter 1989). John Elliott defines action research as:

> "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it". It aims to feed practical judgement in concrete situations, and the validity of the "theories" or hypotheses it generates depends not so much on "scientific" tests of truth, as on their usefulness in helping people to act more intelligently and skilfully
>
> (Elliott 1991: 69)

Action research here is conceived as an inquiry into what is judged to be worthwhile change. It is interested in improving practice through understanding and desires to be useful, by seeking knowledge about and for particular situations and purposes rather than for absolute generalisations and predictions (cf: Bassey 1999). 'Critical' versions of action research problematise experience and stress the importance of a wider analysis of underlying structures and ideologies (Carr and Kemmis 1986). Similarly, I am concerned throughout with questioning ultimate aims and values, illuminating the political, cultural and theoretical assumptions motivating practice and the histories that have formed them.

Each chapter that follows focuses on material from one or other case study. The accounts I give are not comprehensive, but rather, 'aggregate narratives' that try to respond to a set of questions without sacrificing specificity (cf. Collins 1995: 32). Chapter Four addresses issues of 'cultural value'; Chapter Five presents moments typical of Media Studies A-Level teaching, in which the teacher aims to provide 'theory' – seen as the 'conceptual tool' necessary for students to achieve successful practical or written work. Chapter Six deals with student productions and evaluations, and Chapter Seven extends the question of writing. The broader issues I raised at the beginning of this chapter run as themes throughout.

Theoretical and analytical perspectives

I analyse my data as discourse; I do not see language as a content that represents reality or experience, but as constructing and giving it meaning, as always also embodying a specific mode of address and thus relational. Ways of talking do not report on pre-existing attitudes or inner states, but are practices or performances that select from culturally available sets of ideas and terms, for

particular functions; 'people achieve identities, realities, social order and social relationships through talk' (Baker 1997). (See also Potter and Wetherell 1987; Potter and Wetherell 1994). Divergent responses are 'occasioned' (Billig 1997) by implicit expectations of specific circumstances and interlocutors. Generalisability comes not from statistical sampling (how far data can be taken as representative of broader social groups from which respondents come), but from the fact that any discourse is the product of the broader social domain (Fiske 1994: 196; Hollway 1989: 15). At the same time, Judith Butler has cautioned that an approach to language as a form of action can lead to a legislative focus on individuals seen as responsible for their words, as in the case of race hate laws (Butler 1997). I therefore stress the citational quality of speech, which is never individually 'owned'. My understanding of the concept of subjectivity is that it is shifting and multiply determined. It is shaped and brought into being by discursive practices that offer positions from which it can be understood, that are available on the basis of major categories of social difference (Hollway 1989). Yet it cannot be reduced to these alone. Social structures are lived through the psyche, through emotional and cultural identifications. Hollway in particular explores the relational aspects of discursive constructions, showing that inconsistencies in accounts may indicate defences against real or imagined others, alternative thoughts, fantasies or meanings (op. cit.).

I draw on educational theory that has argued that teachers and students 'are what they do' (Fairclough 1989: 38; Jones 1993), that schools constitute subjects and their capacities (Ball 1990; Hunter 1994; Walkerdine 1986a) and are sites for identity formation (Wexler 1992), or views pedagogy as performative (Gallop 1995). It enables education to be seen as a practice through which subjects produce themselves and are produced (rather than bringing identities fully formed) and of classrooms as places in which certain performances are expected from both teachers and students. Pedagogies cannot easily be designated either repressive or emancipatory; progressivism can regulate and normalise even more effectively because its power is disavowed (Henriques et al. 1984; Walkerdine 1981; Walkerdine 1986a). I explore the role of talk in constructing and negotiating the 'epistemological cultures' of the classroom (Edwards and Mercer 1987: 161). However, I also use recent writing that has

opened a dialogue between psychoanalysis and education, which along with government, as Freud noted in an oft-quoted passage, are those 'impossible' professions in which we can be sure beforehand of achieving unsatisfying results (Britzman 1998; Donald 1992; Ellsworth 1997; Felman 1997 (1982); Penley 1989). Classrooms are not spaces where conscious, rational egos meet, and I try to understand the ambivalent, unconscious and intersubjective dimensions of pedagogy. Teaching often occurs in a context of difference between teacher and students – of class, race, gender and age. It might provoke reflection on mortality and ageing, as teachers witness the often dramatic transitioning of their charges from childhood into adulthood, whilst in other ways confronting a cohort of students who remain eternally young. It can engage desire in overt forms; as I hinted in describing my horror course in the Introduction, I steered an uneven course between complicity in and rejection of students' and my projections. Todd's edited collection has also explored its more intangible dimensions; teachers' investments of desire in knowledge, their longing to create 'love, passion and commitment' in students, their fantasies about who they want students to be (Todd 1997). Felman's psychoanalytic perspectives on the inner resistances to knowledge, with which teaching must also deal, have influenced my understanding of the nature of learning (Felman 1997 (1982)). More broadly, psychoanalysis enables me to value the seemingly trivial, as my slip of the tongue in mistaking students' ages, discussed in the Introduction, unravelled some of my investments in the research project. In analysing students' video productions, jokes and even mis-spellings, I am trying to learn from the 'least authoritative sources of information', where knowledge is 'not in possession of itself' (Felman, ibid.: 37).

Post-structuralist and postmodern theory has argued that all knowledge is perspectival (e.g.: Altheide and Johnson 1998: 303) and inevitably bound up in power relations (Gordon 1980; Rabinow 1984). Consequently, many have argued for more self-reflexive approaches to qualitative research, which highlight the researcher's own values, politics and ethics and make visible the power relations enacted in the research process and in interpretation (e.g.: Denzin and Lincoln 1998; Gitlin 1994; Shacklock and Smyth 1998; Walkerdine 1986b). The researcher's self can thereby become a tool of and resource for fieldwork, rather than a hindrance to objectivity that should be eliminated (Denzin and Lincoln

1998; Usher 1996). I discuss reflexivity in terms of what Elspeth Probyn describes as my 'ontological self' engaging in research (1993) and so highlight the extent to which meaning is 'made' by me as researcher (Nightingale 1989; Shotter 1993). Thus, in the Introduction I explained how my situatedness within a biographical trajectory shaped by class, age, gender and sexuality influenced my research questions and interpretations, and indicated some sources of my 'signature' or 'way of being in the text' (Clandinin and Connelly 1998: 173). As Probyn points out, postmodern ethnography (e.g.: Clifford and Marcus 1986; Geertz 1988) has often inflected the concept of reflexivity in a more epistemological direction, defining it as a heightened self-consciousness about strategies for textual representation of the 'other'. I too reject the idea that empirical research can 'give a voice' to the marginalised in any simple sense. Participants' views here are framed and placed by my own agendas and thus do not 'speak for themselves'. However, I have not sought to develop innovative writing practices, bearing in mind Probyn's warning that these can lead to an excessive 'discursivity' and 'banal egotism' that further reinforce rather than undermine the authority of the writer (1993: 80). Rather, I use a personal voice in order to demonstrate the link between the rational and the emotional, the cognitive and the affective, which is fundamental to my argument about how we learn and know. I also hope to demonstrate that reflexivity can achieve, not a centring of the self, but an opening of oneself to others, as Probyn suggests.

As Hunt points out in a useful survey, researchers addressing reflexivity tend to focus on their conscious experiences, feelings or social roles adopted in interaction with their subjects, and often write about them informally, through diaries or anecdotal accounts, rather than in a sustained analytical way (1989). Alternatively, aspects of identity may be noted in a prefatory way, as if their impact is self-evident (for an example, see Goodman 1998). It is assumed, as Foucault noted, that these are 'games with oneself', that go on behind the scenes but efface themselves when they have had their effects (Miller 1994: 36). Within education, the action research tradition has also emphasised the value of reflection, but again, it focuses on conscious experiences, although Richards has argued for a practice that includes autobiographical attention to teachers' own media tastes (1998). I extend reflexivity in the direction of greater introspection

about the unconscious, intra-psychic dimensions of research to show how it influences the entire process of data gathering and interpretation.

Data analysis in practice: two examples

In this section, I illustrate the criteria I use to generate readings through an analysis of two interview extracts. In both cases, I start by following Fairclough's recommendations as adapted by Buckingham (Buckingham 1993; Buckingham 2000; Fairclough 1989). I look for evidence of the social relations that are enacted through talk, how they are shaped by context and by the real and imagined 'others' who are addressed. Discourses about horror do not simply capture what is in a text, since texts can be described in potentially unlimited ways; they also offer subject positions through which speakers may make claims about themselves and the world. The extent to which they are able to take them up depends in part on a broader social realm that suggests what is appropriate to their age, gender, class, etc. I then go on to consider how the theory I have assimilated, my purposes and my background knowledge of the speakers and situation, influence my readings.

The first extract comes from the start of an interview with one student, Alan, carried out in the summer of 1995 (at an early stage of my research, when I was still teaching).

Sara: Well I thought that we'd start with a bit about the history of who or what got you into horror in the first place
Alan: That - that's a tough one really, er / I suppose I've always really been into horror movies as a kid. It was quite a while until my parents let me watch one, I think the first one must have been about, the old Hammer Horror movies er *Dracula the Prince of Darkness*, that was the first one, er, Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, good old classics there, I've always sort of kept in touch with those, er, I never really wanted to sort of branch out because sort of I had these nightmares, I always had an overactive imagination especially with werewolves, it's quite ironic really (laughs) er a friend of mine sort of had like three or four of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* films and we sort of watched like a marathon of them er / totally impressed, you know, I was so impressed at Wes Craven, I was hooked and bought them off him. Quite funny when we first watched the movie because his mum came down in a Freddy mask, red and black striped jumper and a claw / (laughs) I was sort of shocked but it sort of broke the ice a bit /

In terms of content, this extract might provide evidence of young people's access to proscribed material, and of forms of regulation within the home. Alan watched *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) before the age of eighteen, when he would 'officially' be allowed to see it (he was seventeen at the time of this interview), and his parents also forbade him to watch horror films (4-5). It might therefore be significant that he first watched it at a friend's house, where parental prohibition can be subverted. The more interesting questions from my perspective, however, are the discourses on which Alan draws to account for his experience. The term 'overactive imagination' (9-10), for example, suggests an 'adult' discourse about children that Alan incorporated into his self-image and used to regulate his own viewing. Alan does not explain the negotiations through which he and his friend decided to watch the films, but the term 'marathon' (12) is interesting in relation to the statement that he 'never really wanted to sort of branch out' (8). It may indicate not just the length of the viewing, but also an event that he consciously prepared for and actively participated in. It is clear that the meanings of texts are altered by contexts of spectatorship, and also, since he describes 'first' watching the films (14), by repeated viewing. The mother who dresses up as Freddy Kruger is engaged in 'regulating' or changing the meaning of the films for her son and his friend (15-16). The anecdote is an amusing counterpoint to the condemnation of children's 'emulation' of horror figures by the popular press, although her own motives can only be guessed at. Alan's 'shock' may refer to the suddenness of her appearance, or to the ways in which she disrupted his expectations of adult, parental or gendered behaviour and relations with younger people.

Alan indicates a strength of emotional attachment to the films he likes, by using an expression - 'kept in touch with' (8) – that is often applied to friends. Referring to Hammer Horror as 'good old classics' (7) marks the temporal context of the interview. As Kermode has noted, earlier films were only re-evaluated in the wake of more violent and spectacular ones that appeared from the 70s onwards (1997). The meaning of texts, that is, alters according to the range one knows and is able to relate them to, as Bennett's concept of reading formation suggests (1983). Alan's reference to director Wes Craven (13) also shows how authorship discourse has become part of the popular critical apparatus (Collins 1995). Claiming to have been 'impressed' by him, or naming actors (7), serves to

position Alan as distanced and knowledgeable about films, whereas the reference to his 'nightmares' (9) suggests perhaps involvement with their narratives of victimisation. In either case, however, it refutes notions that audiences 'identify' only with monsters. The range of references and evaluative criteria in this extract might support Barker's claim that 'high investors' in a text or genre develop richer and more complex relationships with them than casual viewers (e.g. Barker and Brooks 1998: 232-9). When Alan then describes himself as 'hooked' (13), he draws on popular discourses that understand media consumption in terms of passive addiction. However, buying the videos in this context links emotional and economic investment; it might symbolise a transition from a child identity (defined in terms of fear, having nightmares) to a different self, who can appreciate films that were once avoided and has 'branched out'. His words should not necessarily be taken as an account of the actual experience of viewing, but as a construction by which he relates this change and makes an identity claim.

However, my research procedures are implicated in the knowledge he produces. My opening question (1) assumes that there must have been an event or person who initiated Alan's interest, and so invites a 'narrative ordering' (Shotter and Gergen 1989) of a unitary and coherent self, seen in terms of cause and effect. Alan in part refuses this – by claiming instead 'always' to have been interested in horror (2), and mentioning different aspects of his subjectivity – and in part accepts it, by describing a moment of 'epiphany' (12-13). Further, I position him as someone who is 'into' horror. His switch of register between the 'emotional' and 'critical' (6-10) may be a negotiation of broader discursive contexts in which horror fans are seen either as 'people with problems', encouraging the construction of a personal self in relation to the genre, or as possessors of specialised knowledge.

Our relations, the context of the interview and his understanding of its purposes may also shape what he says. At this point, Alan and I had known each other for two years as teacher and student (in A-Level classes and the extra-curricular horror course). He had frequently talked to me about himself in snatched moments before and after lessons and over lunch breaks. When he expressed guilt about taking up my time in college, I occasionally said that it was a two-way

process and that his giving me an interview would be helpful to me. Although I intended to be reassuring, this may have added a particular pressure on the interview, especially given the fact that I was myself unsure of what data I was looking for. The various 'Alans' he gives me, therefore, may reflect not only his multi-faceted relationship with horror, but also his questions about what I am seeking from him, whether insights into films from an informal 'expert', amusing anecdotes or confessions of 'darker secrets'. His address to me is multiple; researcher, friend, counsellor figure, fellow fan and teacher. Moreover, the interview took place at the end of his time at college, and one awkward issue that emerged later was negotiating whether or how we might keep in contact. He might therefore have been wondering which versions of himself would be most likely to make me to want to do so; he might be showing me both that he needs me, yet also that he has more to offer than just being 'needy'. Alan's identity is therefore 'achieved' rather than fixed (Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995: 13), and it is dynamic, produced in relation to me, or more accurately, who he thinks I am. Since he would not necessarily have given the same response to a different interviewer, it is also variable.

My readings too are potentially unending, according to my purposes and investments. The interview took place in his (parents') home rather than at college, with me perched rather awkwardly on the end of his bed. The gleaming, spotless surfaces in the kitchen, the change from pastel colours on the walls downstairs to purple and black in his bedroom, reflected back my fantasies about the repression of life in the suburbs. Therefore I initially focused on the 'emotional' Alan – for whom horror articulates his inner pain – and was inclined to dismiss the other versions of himself as less authentic, for instance by interpreting his demonstration of knowledge about films and his laugh (10) as a disavowal of emotion. A reading that stressed the conscious, deliberative Alan, on the other hand, might enable me to refuse responsibility for the confusion I myself caused him through my failure to explain the aims of the interview or the nature of our relationship. To suggest now that he uses horror films as a means to reflect on his changing self relates to a broader argument about the utility of this form (see below).

One-to-one interviews such as this tended to produce more reflective, serious narrated identities, and group interviews were more ludic. (Fine and Weis note similar findings in their work 1998: 29). Therefore I will contrast this with an extract from an interview with four students carried out during the first stage of my research with Kate. Mehrin has just been describing how she lives next to a funeral parlour and near a church.

Mehrin: I get Helen and friends to come and watch a scary video, and Helen, 'come to the church with me!'
Helen: Uh-uh! (shakes head)
Mehrin: And you know you'll come!
Sara: And so do you think you will go down there?
Mehrin:(Yeah, she goes to me, 'come to my house' -
Helen: (As long as I'm protected by some certain people!
Sara: Who'll protect you?
Mehrin (excitedly): No one, no one! -
Helen: My boyfriend -
Mehrin: No, he's not coming, he's not coming! Or we'll be in it together, me and your boyfriend will be in it together, Helen, we'll lock her in my house
Helen: You'll come to get me and lock me up, in that nasty place
Sara: And what will you watch?
Mehrin: Oh something like, something really horrible, like, not like *Poltergeist*, my mum was saying, the *Candyman*, that in umm, it was a true story and that got me afterwards, because umm, the black slave that umm they did that, they burned him alive, no they stung him to death first, and then they burned him alive or something and that's why in the film he has bees or whatever coming out of his mouth, now *Candyman 2*'s come out and my mum's not letting me watch it, she says 'that's not coming in my house!'
Sara: Oh really, so did she see that first *Candyman*?
Mehrin: I've never seen it, she says she's seen it and it disturbed her when they found out it's a true story, and my mum's a grown woman and my mum doesn't get scared of these things, and she was explaining the story to me...

The context of this interview was in school (in the edit suite at the back of the classroom) and during lesson time, which may help explain why Helen and Mehrin took it as an opportunity to unleash a subversive energy. I too was swept up in the laughing, joking atmosphere and my questions (5, 8, 15) encourage them to develop the fantasy scenario rather than call them back to more distanced analysis. The fact that I presented myself as interested in horror may have allowed Mehrin to speak in a way she might not have with an interviewer who more clearly disliked it, but the students barely knew me at this point and I was not their main focus. Their use of third and second person address ('you'

and 'her', 12) suggests that they are both speaking to each other, privately, and publicly performing for the benefit of an audience. Moreover, they took control of the interview situation; shortly after this exchange Mehrin turned to the other two students and said 'What about Leah and Louisa, you haven't said much, we'll let you say something now'.

Mehrin and Helen are not describing an occasion beyond the interview context, but a purely hypothetical one (although 'getting a video' with friends is undoubtedly a regular event in their lives). As Moss also found (1993), Mehrin builds a picture of *Candyman* (1992) on the basis of what she has heard about it (from her mother, who in turn has been told it is a 'true story', 26) rather than knowledge of the actual text. Again, therefore, how audiences talk cannot be equated with their experience. Horror signifies more narrowly here; its (publicly available) meanings as 'scary' (1) and 'horrible' (16) are made to count, rather than its aesthetic or other qualities, but they are appropriated, I would argue, as a terrain on which Helen and Mehrin negotiate their friendship. What interests me here, therefore, is how horror as a topic structures or sanctions particular ways of speaking (differently from soap opera, for example, cf : Buckingham 1993: 99-100).

Helen has already described (in great detail) 'those blood and guts scenes' from horror films and then gone on to claim 'I can't watch them, they're horrible', adopting a typically 'feminine' persona in relation to socially distributed discourses about horror audiences. In response, Mehrin made sarcastic asides ('yeah right Helen') that exposed the contradictions in Helen's pose, just as she here insists that Helen will, after all, come and watch the video (4). She then constructs a scenario in which Helen will be locked up in her house and forced to watch 'something really horrible' (16), such as *Candyman*, the awfulness of which she underlines in her description of it. She makes Helen more vulnerable by stripping her of the protection she claims her boyfriend will provide, either by excluding him or imagining him as colluding with her (11-13). The exchange encapsulated a picture I developed of their relationship during my observation. They were friends both inside and outside school; both were minority ethnic students, the only two in this class. Their exchanges often contained undertones of aggression. For instance, one day Helen was proudly showing everyone in the

class a metal ring piercing through the end of her long, perfectly manicured thumbnail, at which Mehrin commented 'I'm going to pull it out'.

I was reminded of Valerie Walkerdine's argument: 'Underneath stories of quiet little girls are murderous fantasies. These are not there because they are essential to the female body or psyche but because the stories of our subjugation do not tell the whole truth: our socialization does not work' (1990: xiv). Mehrin, like all girls, is growing up surrounded by powerful fictions of femininity, which tell them that they are or should be 'quiet and little', that those who watch horror films are 'evil', as Mehrin called herself later in the interview. They are further compounded by representations of ethnicity. When I asked the teacher whether she was worried that parents might object to their children studying horror films, she replied 'the only thing I am concerned about is Mehrin, little Mehrin...'. Her response seemed to draw on common assumptions about the 'overprotective' attitudes of Asian parents to their daughters. The 'fact' that Mehrin's family watch horror films together, that her mother shields her daughter from one that might be upsetting as well as recounting its details to her, is beside the point to the extent that Mehrin must make sense of herself within these discourses. Selecting this extract serves to endorse Walkerdine's view, revealing fantasies 'beneath the surface' of a 'little' girl that are sadistic - and even actively desiring, since evacuating Helen's boyfriend from the scene enables Mehrin to take his place.

Yet Mehrin's fantasy is more ambivalent than it might at first seem. She earlier recounted seemingly repeated terrifying events when family members locked her in a dark room after watching a horror film; she therefore inflicts on Helen only a pain that she has herself experienced. (We might relate this to Clover's argument about the 'reactive' rather than 'assaultive' gaze, in which one gazes at 'surrogates for one's own past victimized self', 1992: 175). Nor does she want to offer Helen a film such as *Poltergeist* (1982) which is one of Mehrin's favourites, although she says it 'scares me like anything'. Instead, she offers something unfamiliar, which will frighten her too. Further, her choice of title indicates a desire to give something to Helen, who is mixed race. At the start of the interview, I had asked students about their favourite film types, to which the others had responded in generic terms – naming thrillers, comedies and so on.

Helen, by contrast, stated emphatically 'I like / American films with like black artists, or umm, comedies / I did like *Waiting to Exhale*, and I like films like *House Party*, // umm, American films with a lot of black actors in', aligning herself with her black identity. *Candyman* might fall into the category of films Helen likes (American, and with a black star). The exchange about horror films provides a means by which Mehrin can address aspects of her feelings about Helen – desires to control as well as to please her - that might be too threatening to confront directly. Moreover, Mehrin's reference to her mother as a 'grown woman' (26) may show that she, like Alan, is using films as a means to think about herself and who she is or might become. Watching *Candyman* would put her on a level with her mother, or even enable her to surpass her. Yet she also calls on her, implicitly, as support for her own interest in horror that public discourses may prohibit to girls. It raises questions about my role and function for Mehrin, as a grown woman myself, who might think *Poltergeist* to be tame fare.

As is clear, I make my claims on the basis of evidence that is not 'on the page', that is, other information I gathered in the course of my observations. The theory I have read draws my attention to particular aspects of the data, such that their significance resides in the work they are put to do (cf. Clandinin and Connelly 1998: 170; Hollway 1989). Here, in trying to convey something of Alan and Mehrin's vital and complex textual engagement, I want to challenge views of youth audiences as innocent, passive or 'corrupted'. I refute assumptions that horror films have simple 'effects' or determinate meanings to suggest instead that they act as a cultural resource that enable these particular young people to explore the condition of, for instance, being not yet a 'grown woman', or a child with an 'overactive imagination'. Textual meanings are thus both 'found and created' (Silverstone 1994: 164). This argument has a particular function in the context of this thesis since it sustains my view that horror films are useful 'tools to think with'. It implicitly critiques pedagogies that propose interventions without regard to students' existing, informal knowledge and learning and prepares for my later exploration of students' responses to the official discourse teachers offer. I also choose an extract in which a young woman expresses interest in horror to anticipate a similar argument I make about Lauren, in Chapter Six. Reflexivity, however, requires me to question my own motivations as well. In

thus arguing, I ally myself with postmodern, left and feminist perspectives (and individuals) that I admire. But I also construct Mehrin in my own image, as an angry and fiery sexual dissident in the making, just as I argued in Chapter Two that Cherland's projections shaped her accounts of her subjects as would-be feminists. When I encountered Mehrin again during my second case study, I exclaimed without thinking on how 'glamorous' she looked. What I meant, I realised later, was that I was surprised (and disappointed) that her appearance had become more conventionally heterosexual in the intervening two years. The extent to which my representation of her had been overlaid by my own fantasies was gently reflected back to me by Mehrin's dubious glance and her response: 'No – just / ordinary'.

Ethical, political and epistemological issues

Critiques of realism, positivism and foundationalism require new approaches to judging the validity of such readings (Altheide and Johnson 1998; Gergen 1999; Lather 1994). They cannot be objectively assessed, and nor are they reproducible by others, because they are embedded in specific interpretive perspectives and my own knowledge and perceptions of the situation. I have not sought to gain direct 'respondent validation', as some propose (Lincoln and Guba 1985), firstly because it may set limits on the analysis critics provide, as I suggested in the previous chapter in relation to Barker and Brooks's work. Secondly, Lauren's response to my article about her work (three years after she produced it) is worth quoting here. 'I read your work and thought it was excellent, to be quite honest I'd forgotten all about it, so I was sixteen then, god where has the time gone now I'm working full time and paying loads of bills, what I'd give to be back at college!' As she conveys so perceptively, students' practical work was one small part of a course that they were taking en route to somewhere else in their lives. I had the luxury of full-time funding that allowed me to spend years pondering its meaning and was motivated by a number of factors, including career or status gain. A degree of irreverence about the significance of my work to participants is fully in order, and whilst I appreciate her praise, it may reveal as much about our power relations as my insights.

The preferable terms on which my research should be judged are its utility, its aesthetics, my accountability for it and its ethics or social and political commitments. In relation to the first, I aim to provide critical or 'perspicuous representations' of classroom practice, into which theory is integrated and which are 'practical and instructive' (Cohen and Mannion 1994: Chapter 10; Shotter 1993: 20). I hope to be accessible and 'pedagogic', to 'share information in ways that stimulate others to reflect, to think and to generate and share their own knowledge' (Goodman 1998: 55), or to 'generate conversations' with teachers (Clandinin and Connelly 1998). My specific examples illustrate broader issues – as, in the Introduction, I discussed my own teaching and relation to horror films in order to mount an argument about the inadequacies of dominant models of media education and the role of 'ignorance' in learning. I try to be explicit and self-critical about the kinds of prior assumptions on which my readings are based, in order to be personally accountable for them (Denzin and Lincoln 1998: 28), and to provide sufficiently detailed examples to allow them to be challenged. Eisner suggests we apply aesthetic or rhetorical criteria to assess whether interpretations are adequately compelling, powerful or elegant to command assent (Eisner 1991). Finally, I see my commitments as a matter of 'doing justice' to my respondents (Levinson 1998). I invite assessment of my analyses according to whether they are 'felicitous' or 'infelicitous' (Austin 1975) rather than true or false; whether they successfully make a different type of intervention in arguments about media violence and education. I hold that we should take seriously the learning and pleasures that the mainstream media offer, and that by attending to young people, we may begin to understand what those are. But I also reject the consistent use of teachers as convenient scapegoats in public debates and eschew polarised views that they are either class oppressors or 'transformative intellectuals' (Giroux), either of which impose too great a burden on their work. My own professional experiences and loyalties may influence the extent to which I depict the classroom as a site of struggle that is both more and less bitter than it is often portrayed.

Critics have rightly queried the value of the knowledge we produce if we take our own subjectivity as a resource, as do I (Usher 1996). I tried in a number of ways to ensure that I was doing more than just encountering myself again, in a displaced form. In selecting data, I chose instances that seemed 'resonant', a

term Usher and Edwards have used in discussing Derrida's work. What resonates suggests something important is happening, that has a purchase with one's concerns, but about which there is more to be said and known (1994: 123). I was guided by my 'feelings', in this respect. However, these were not purely idiosyncratic but shaped by my 'informal theory' (Bryant 1996: 114) or 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1990: 52-65) as a former teacher. I ascertained the extent to which they were shared in discussions with Kate and Geoff and with teachers in INSET days, workshops at conferences, as well as more casually, throughout the period of my research. For instance, I discuss student videos that appeared initially to be, variously, sexist (Jason), sexist, ageist, racist, and self-oppressive (Lauren), tastelessly 'vulgar' (Richard), or lame in creative terms but accompanied by sophisticated theoretical commentary (Louisa), and cite teachers' responses. I do not endorse our concerns in any simple way, but interrogate the processes, histories and discourses that produce such work as a problem for teachers. In particular, Hunter's analysis of education as a pastoral discipline of ethical formation made me realise how utterly unsurprising it was that I should begin by worrying over the ideological significance of the work and the characters of the individuals who produced it (1994; 1996). However, given my commitments to young people, it seemed appropriate to focus on precisely these texts to develop my arguments about learning.

I also attended to moments that challenged rather than confirmed my own assumptions and where others did not tell me what I wanted to hear. I base Chapter Four on the question of cultural value because it was a central concern for Geoff, and it was raised frequently by teachers in my workshops. Some were repulsed by the content of film extracts I showed, as was the teacher quoted at the start of the chapter, and asked me whether I was betraying students by failing to introduce them to the (superior) products of the Gothic tradition. Many worried over students' ignorance of cinematic history, which was highlighted when the UCLES Board set *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) as an extended essay topic one year and it became clear that many students had not seen earlier film versions of the story. My initially dismissive reaction was the product of my training and reading in ideological analysis that had marginalised questions of taste and evaluation. I had to learn to recognise their fundamental importance to teachers' sense of identity, to understand their sources (such as

their 'dream of love', discussed in Chapter One), and to realise their relevance and vitality to students too. In that chapter also, therefore, I discuss my irritation with a student's distinctions between 'advanced' and 'basic' horror, in which I was eventually forced to recognise my own fantasies about students' 'authentic' media culture, as something that they could simply 'express' in the classroom.

I took cues also from students' responses, for instance by focusing on classroom exchanges where they seemed to be particularly confused, bored or animated, as I assumed these would reward further analysis. I listened equally to anything that would either sustain or disrupt my arguments, as did Mehrin's remark. In Chapter Five, for example, I give a positive and optimistic reading of a 'crude', sexualised joke made by a male student, and make it bear considerable weight for my arguments about learning. I remained uneasy, however, about whether this would be seen as over-interpretation of an off-the-cuff comment, and was also aware that teachers are more often required to subject such humour to 'moral problematisation' (Hunter 1996: 10) than to validate it. A few weeks after writing the chapter, I ran into Charlie, a former student on my horror course whom I had not seen since. Nearly seven years on, he asked me if I remembered 'Edward Dildo-Hands'. When I looked blank, he reminded me that this play on 'Scissorhands' was students' answer to my 'theory' that knives were 'phallic symbols'. The fact that he retained a memory of this 'mere' joke helpfully reinforced my sense of the value of my argument, but it also made me rethink my relationship to my students. I had perhaps forgotten it because I then had no way of mobilising such in/subordinate expressions pedagogically. The moments I described in the Introduction were those where I felt excluded and external to their culture - their mockery of my clothes, for example – or where their resistance seemed intransigently overt. 'Edward Dildo-hands' made me see something I could not at the time; how students paradoxically sustained my authority as a teacher by challenging it from within, on my terms, and thereby gave me something a little more intimate than I was then able to accept from them.

Probyn draws attention to one other important issue that ethnographers often neglect: the economic and discursive conditions that enable them to 'be there' in the field and to speak on behalf of particular 'others' (1993). Here, my status as

white, relatively middle class, educated and so on is perhaps less significant than the framing of this research project. Linking 'violence', 'education' and 'young people' – as does my title – is a powerful move, which may have been relevant to obtaining funding. It may also have been seductive in promising the 'value for money' and practical results that grant-giving bodies are increasingly demanding (cf. Bryant 1996: 108). It thus raises the issue of the broader effects of my work, how it is likely to be heard and by whom. Greg Philo (Chapter One) takes a child's comment that it would be 'cool to blow someone away' as material for orchestrating a moral panic and for his own self-aggrandisement. I would read it in context, allow it specificity as fantasy and link it to my own occasional destructive urges. Ultimately, however, I cannot control how others will read my data; their response will depend on the extent to which they share my commitments and perspectives.

Reflexivity and the learning process

Thus far, this chapter follows the conventions of methodology chapters of doctoral research. I have presented what I did as though it followed a coherent order and logic, derived from an animating even if evolving intention underpinned by theoretical perspectives. This serves an important function in making my work available for debate or a 'symbolic dialogue' with readers (Altheide and Johnson 1998: 301). It is, however, largely fictional insofar as it omits the contingent and haphazard aspects of the process, as others have also recognised (Bryman and Burgess 1994; Walford 1991). I now try to capture some of these in order to explain how I have used reflection on the process of my research as the basis for the claims I make about learning and teaching in classrooms. 'One learns about method by thinking about how one makes sense of one's own life' (Denzin 1998: 315).

The location of the research was largely opportunistic. It depended on my connections, the availability and willingness of teachers to let me into their classroom and my sense of whether I wanted to work with them. I met Kate at an A-Level conference and liked her style; I thought she looked cool. I was able to contact her subsequently through my supervisor. She in turn put me in touch with Geoff whom she had met when thinking about applying for the Head of

Department post at his school. During the period of my research power dynamics between us were fluid, and did not reduce to simple formulae and hierarchies. Even in the space of a single conversation I might be positioned as a fellow 'academic' discussing theory, a horror 'expert' advising on textual interpretations, a more or less harsh judge of their teaching ability, a teacher myself who would understand the pressures they faced. But I was also, sometimes, a friend sharing the problems of relationships or the pleasures of gossip, even (when Geoff bought me a *Jurassic Park* 'dinosaur egg') something more like a daughter.

In the first stage, I was uncomfortable with my more passive observer role, where I felt both indistinguishable from a school inspector or appraiser and indebted to Kate and Geoff for their time and generosity. I sought ways of giving in return, for instance, by organising a visiting lecture for Kate's students from Doug Bradley, who starred as Pinhead in the *Hellraiser* series – although naturally this also advantaged me by displaying my contacts with the horror world. I represented the action research phase (to them and to myself) as an issue of both reciprocity and ethics. It is often argued that to be 'critical' or 'emancipatory', research should encourage respondents' participation in the process of conducting it and share its results and benefits with them (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Lather 1991; Tripp 1998). Some have suggested that the action researcher's full involvement in the practices s/he studies has an inherent value in achieving change and understanding (Bryant 1996: 114). I therefore thought that feeding back my findings might provide a 'trading point' between the full-time researcher and the busy classroom teacher (Goodson 1991), whilst testing out the new problems emerging from alternative ideas would be preferable to a purely evaluative critique of a single course. Collaborating with them would be less exploitative and distant and would modify the power relations between us by valuing their competence or 'subjugated' knowledge (Elliott 1991; Usher and Edwards 1994: 54-5). I envisaged my role as perhaps a 'critical friend' who could help Geoff and Kate improve their practice through a dialogue that would enable their reflection and enhance their autonomy (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Schon 1983; Stenhouse 1975). However, this phase of the work proved considerably more problematic than I expected. Kate often emphasised that my involvement in drawing up lesson content had made her 'lazy', less likely to take

control and ownership of lessons, and more self-conscious if she 'messed up'. My anxiety about increasing her workload led me to try to be helpful by providing handouts or edited clips, but this seemed to construct her as lacking in expertise and further undermine her. Such difficulties were an illustration that we cannot know in advance what the power effects and relations of our work will be, that applies as much to teaching as to research.

In Chapter Seven, I draw on John Shotter's term 'knowing of a third kind' to describe a practical-moral knowledge 'from within' that enables us to act intelligibly and to identify 'what we feel matters', but which cannot necessarily be made conscious (Shotter 1993). I analyse students' writing and videos in these terms and indicate how we might work with such implicit and even unconscious knowledge pedagogically. However, it was through working with Kate and Geoff that I began to appreciate the need for such perspectives. Action research and critical or radical pedagogy have much in common. Both argue that knowledge must be systematised and made explicit in order to achieve social change. Both claim to restore moral and political concerns to education, in opposition to values (for instance, of 'bureaucratic rationality') that prevent the realisation of human potential (see Rizvi 1989). Action research thus instates a hierarchy between the prestigious enlightened practitioner and her degraded, subordinate 'other': the 'instructional technician' (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 223), who 'does' rather than 'reflects', whose teaching is 'constrained by assumptions, habit, precedent, coercion and ideology' (ibid. 192). Many of my conversations with Kate and Geoff therefore attempted to explore the values and principles underlying their work, whilst I came to doubt how appropriate this was. Kate, for instance, was preoccupied with quite other concerns than the course I was observing, such as the classroom management of an unruly GCSE class, or responding to a violent and troubled parent. My invitations to 'reflect' seemed to create additional pressure when what she most needed was someone to help sort out bookings for the edit suite and cameras. Whilst this might show the limitations of outsider-generated research agendas, it was questionable in any case whether the issues she was dealing with could have been solved by applying systematic inquiry skills of the sort action researchers prescribe (see for example, Carr and Kemmis 1986: 186; McMahon 1999: 166). They seemed to ignore the material constraints on her work, as Hammersley argues (1993). Geoff too eloquently

resisted on occasions the 'theoretical contemplation of the everyday' (Richards 1998: 190). For instance, I once asked him what he would describe as one of his favourite media lessons. He replied 'oh, I would say, the last one I taught'. From the point of view of action research, this cheerful pragmatism, lacking a strategic intention, represents an ethical failure. Yet to read his response in this way would imply that 'getting through the school day' constitutes no kind of achievement and would devalue what and how teachers know, as Gore has argued (1991). As an observer and ex-teacher, I respected and appreciated the skills that made their survival in the complex realities and immediacy of the classroom possible. Their teaching depended, not on 'irrational' and ideologically obfuscatory practices, but on expert knowledge that was routine, contingent and technical, the outcome of field-specific practices (of assessment, classroom management, etc) that was not easily amenable to consciousness. (See Hammersley 1993; Hunter 1994 for these points). The failure of our 'dialogue' could not be transformed into success by more of the same, because we were speaking as different kinds of people, from different places. I had to adapt to their ways of knowing rather than they to mine – and as I explain below, this had beneficial consequences for me too.

Despite my attempts to explain what I was doing or to remain 'invisible', students constantly subjected me, my clothes, facial piercings and so on to scrutiny, and speculated on my role. They did occasionally ask me when my 'book' would be published, in a tone of fully justified scepticism, and I was occasionally consulted for advice on the grounds that I must be a 'horror fan', but I was more often seen as a student-teacher. I welcomed this in that it gave us something in common, although I sometimes felt it rested on sexist assumptions, particularly about the age and gender difference between Geoff and myself. In Kate's school, students saw me as, variously, her twin or her sister (on the grounds of our perceived similarities in dress and appearance), or a 'mate' she had brought in for company, all of which revealed a certain fascination with her and her life. I apparently caused great amusement to one class by looking more stricken at Kate 'giving them a row' than they themselves claimed to feel. It seemed that most students enjoyed the interest I showed in them (I was flattered to hear an interview described as 'wicked'); Kate suggested that my presence would make the students feel 'special', adding that 'they don't very often get a chance to feel

special'. Although I did not form very intense emotional relationships with any individual students, there was some unspoken bonding between myself and at least one student who subsequently came out as gay. At other times, though, I mattered considerably less to them than I perhaps hoped, as when some students used the fact that an interview had overrun as an excuse to miss their next lesson, heartlessly framing me as a co-conspirator who had to apologise to their teacher at length. Geoff and Kate too positioned me in different ways in front of the students – my ubiquitous tape recorder became the subject of (sometimes barbed) jokes about how I could 'check up' on who had missed lessons. Our reflexivity and involvement were certainly mutual rather than all one-way. Other critics have noted how the researcher may become part of a process of intersubjective identity formation, in which respondents change through having to 'make the familiar strange' in order to explain it to another (Levinson 1998; Probyn 1993). As I try to portray them in subsequent chapters, then, contexts such as classrooms are not a realm of 'the real' exerting a measurable effect on responses. They are themselves a sphere of representation and meaning, as subject to fantasy and interpretation as the realm of the psychic (Kuhn 1984: 5). They are also, as Readings writes of the university, where the 'question of being-together' is raised (Readings 1996: 20) - a processural ground on which selves meet, in whose presence we think and can become more and different types of people than in a one-to-one encounter.

Some of my key arguments in subsequent chapters concern our need for others in order to learn, how they can 'reflect back' what we know, even before we know it ourselves, and the circuitous routes we take to acknowledge the consequent emotional ambivalence of learning relationships. I also suggest that education should reconsider the value of that which gives students a safe 'place to speak from', such as 'descriptive' rather than 'analytic' modes of writing. Again, I reach these conclusions partly through reflecting on my own research procedures. For the most part, I did not work out of a conscious plan but followed courses of action suggested by my supervisor, even down to details of what questions I should ask in interviews. When I wrote up my observations, I initially did so in the form of what he once described as 'realist novels'. Such 'narrative' accounts were the only ways to write that I felt confident with at that stage, but I had little sense of whether or why the aspects on which I focused were

significant. I then received feedback about what points might be worth developing and re-drafted them again and again. I resented as well as appreciated this dependence on him, especially when I reached an 'analysis' that seemed only to repeat points he had already made in his own writing. Back in 1996, in one of my early research diaries, I described Kate's dress style as 'straight butch with heterosexual shoes'. My comment exploited the only bit of difference (and therefore of power) I felt I had from him – an ability to perceive otherwise on the basis of my participation in subcultures from which he was necessarily excluded. When, nearly four years later, he joked that we should assess the appropriateness of an examiner by asking her to send us a photo of her shoes, he found a way to recognise our distinction that I was able to value.

A further question I raise is how we can work with students' existing passions and attachments, even when they seem strange to us, or unrelated to the subject matter being taught - as might Lauren's interest in serial killers, Richard's in male-on-male violence or Zachariah's worship of Mariah Carey. I myself write here, not so much as a horror fan, but as someone with a passion for (and ambivalence about) education, which shaped my methodology and analytic approaches in sometimes bizarre ways. Positivist and post-positivist methodology books, for example, always left me cold (e.g.: Adler and Adler 1998; Lofland and Lofland 1995; Miles and Huberman 1994; Strauss and Corbin 1998). This may have been partly that they offered a model of systematic analysis, based on coding, ordering and abstracting patterns from whole data sets, which didn't seem to bear any resemblance to how I worked with what 'stuck in my mind' and resisted rather than was immediately amenable to interpretation. But the fact that an inordinate number were written by married couples provoked churlish hypothesising on my part about their bourgeois lifestyles beyond the text. Instead, I consistently returned to Cultural Studies and critical theory texts. They too made me despondent, since most of the time they seemed beyond my comprehension and largely irrelevant to my work. To explain why I persisted, I could mention the following: that I was drawn to French philosophy because I found Foucault's writing style curiously erotic, and because as a French undergraduate I had attended Derrida and Cixous's seminars in Paris. I never understood a word, but I enjoyed reporting back to my friends about his bouffant hairdo and her fur coat. I had warmed to feminism and

psychoanalysis since Jacqueline Rose commented approvingly on the colours of my clothes when I went for an interview at Sussex University. I identified with the strong personal voice in Wendy Hollway's book and the dilemmas she described, and wondered where she had found heterosexual men so articulate about their emotions. I liked Valerie Walkerdine's work for similar reasons, but was dismayed when she described in one sentence how she had found herself 'suddenly' able to understand theory. (How did it happen? I wanted to know. And when would it happen to me?) One narrative form to describe my relationship with Clover's work, in particular, is the romance. I had read her 1987 article on the slasher film by chance (waiting in a queue for the photocopier, during my MA year), and it made a lasting impression. It seemed a more desirable academic intervention than the texts I was struggling to cope with on the Critical Theory course: it was clearly written, grounded in textual evidence, and enlightened me about a genre with which I was unfamiliar. When her book was finally published, I remember my excitement as, across a crowded bookshop, my eyes met those of the terrified woman on its front cover and I knew that I had found just what I had been waiting for...

Learning would not be as much fun without such subterranean affections and disaffections, absurdities and desires – and maybe it wouldn't happen at all. Respectable academic writing (that I think of as 'grown up') rarely acknowledges them publicly: whilst work on 'fan subcultures' in relation to media products proliferates, I have yet to read an analysis of *Judy*, the fanzine devoted to Judith Butler that has travelled between North American and British universities. Including them here, rather than saving them for their 'proper' place in the pub, is not a product of my own bold iconoclasm. It has been enabled by theoretical perspectives that provide a legitimating framework for doing so. In particular, Ellsworth's (1997) argument that what teaches is a 'mode of address' seemed to capture how I was pleasurably seduced into learning by images of who I wanted to be (and to have) rather than by a useful 'content' alone. As I argue in later chapters, our passions are where we learn, as well as where we, sometimes, cannot.

The projects I described in Chapter One conceive learning as a linear journey from ignorance to knowledge, in which there is a 'final moment of "having been

taught"' (Ellsworth 1997: 56), a pre-set destination that we can assess and examine. By contrast, I conceive it as a never-ending, restless, unpredictable and convoluted process, which may yet be temporarily quieted when we make connections to the hitherto anomalous. In the Introduction, I represented my initial choice to teach horror as an arbitrary one, but also showed how I may have been reaching for something I needed and wanted – a changed relationship to myself and masculinity, not just to horror films. Throughout my research also, I brooded on questions that seemed to have no importance whatsoever but hovered on the horizons of my consciousness. For instance: Why do I feel like I expand when I teach well, and shrivel when I don't? Why do I take it personally when a student misses a class? Why do I persist in thinking of a good lesson as a nourishing meal? Why do teachers sometimes get so angry with students, and sometimes give so much? Why does a feminist writer (Bronwyn Davies) link a child's joke to a gang rapist? Why is it that everyone seems to agree that young people need positive role models in the classroom, but no teacher actually wants to be one? – And above all, what do any of these questions have to with the study of horror films? I eventually found what I considered to be some answers. The process of doing so involved a return to what I already 'knew' as much as a moving forward. For instance, to understand Davies's comment, I turned to Homi Bhabha's work on mimicry (1994), which I had read some twelve years before. 'Learning' seemed to have happened, not when I 'understood' this theory in an abstract sense (I still could not easily define it or outline its place in Lacanian thought), but when I found a use for it that meant that what seemed puzzling at last found a place. I thus (mis)appropriated concepts as heuristic devices rather than as an overarching framework, although undoubtedly my reading provided a tradition that shaped the kinds of questions I could ask. At the same time, as I have suggested in describing my meetings with Mehrin or Charlie, the responses of others constantly required me to reconsider my arguments. The analyses I offer here are therefore provisional and open to a future (I try to capture something of their temporal nature in showing how my understanding of Richard's work changed during the course of writing about it). Shotter's book provided a means to articulate these issues, and in Sherry Turkle's (1997) description of an 'associative', 'soft' or 'tinkering' style of thought, which develops ideas through borrowing, arranging and re-arranging what is already familiar, I found some correspondence to my own way of working. It

helped me understand my academic diffidence as deriving not just from anxiety about being a woman who abrogates the 'masculine' privilege of doing research, as feminist analysis has often argued (Walkerdine 1987), but from my lack of access to a discourse through which to validate how I proceeded. The significance of my argument about students who work similarly rests less on how 'representative' they are of others (although I also claim that they were) than on the fact that theirs is an approach that education currently undervalues and should learn to work with.

Conclusion

The term 'ethical paradigm' attempts to encapsulate the perspectives on which I draw. In contrast to the 'moral' paradigm of media education described in Chapter One, it stresses that we are social and composite rather than self-creating and self-sufficient creatures and explores our implication in our environment – by which I mean both our media environment and the institutional one of the school. I treat the media as a language, not to argue that it damages us, but in order to consider the relevance to education of postmodern perspectives on subjectivity as constructed within language and the discourses and practices of everyday life (Butler 1997; Collins 1995; Hutcheon 1989; Nicholson 1990; Silverstone 1994; Usher and Edwards 1994; Waugh 1992). In working within the 'language' of the media, we acknowledge our debt to others, to the forms, conventions and understandings that are necessary for us to 'speak' at all. We therefore have to reconceptualise what makes agency possible. The 'moral' paradigm stresses separation and critical autonomy as its only condition, as if without them all is lost. I would suggest, as does Readings, that this is fundamentally unethical, because it suggests that we can 'pay all our debts', overcome and achieve freedom from responsibilities and obligations (Readings 1996: 186). I hold that learning and change always require others, whether textual others we draw on as resources, the others around us whose attention tells us what we know, or the other within us that connects our thoughts in surprising, unintended ways. One consequence is that we lose epistemological certainty, but that does not mean we can know nothing at all. I show how thinking and knowing can be found in unexpected places - in our actions as well as our reflections, our jokes and stories as well as our serious

and abstract analysis. Teaching needs to recognise, value, and develop accountability for our necessary interdependence. We should assess pedagogies on the basis of the 'modes of life' they make possible (Gergen 1999: 36), the specific capacities they form (Hunter 1996), and how far they enable learners to answer their own questions as well as those designated important by others. Within this model, the teacher does not have the crucial but disavowed power she is allotted in progressive pedagogies, where she is both solely responsible for the development of each individual, and simultaneously a mere equal partner. Instead, she is one (important) part of a collectively and provisionally generated communal space of learning, and I call for attention to the social relations and identities her address to students cultivates and brings into being. The broad argument I pursue is that an ethical paradigm requires us to consider the relationships – to the self, and between self and others – that pedagogic techniques install and enable, but too often overlook. I argue that for education to 'move' us, pleasure, desire and passion as well as reason, abstraction and logic must have a place. I do not reject the idea that it should aim to make students 'critical', but I do hold that we need to question: critical of what, by what mechanisms, for what purpose, according to whom? In the remaining chapters, I substantiate this vision and explore how it might impact on what teachers do in the classroom.

Chapter Four - 'Like Shakespeare it's a Good Thing': Cultural Value in the Classroom

> *It is a hot summer day. The class is smaller than usual (eight students), since five students are absent on a Drama trip. Geoff decides not to 'press on' with the planned lesson without them, but to show instead extracts from The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919) and Metropolis (1927). He introduces them by asking students if they have ever seen any silent films before: 'it's a bit of a different experience', he assures them, 'but once you get used to it, it's a very / **important** one'. He asks them to look for 'generic features' which have 'carried through and been influential'. During the screenings, the students are inattentive: Stuart and Shahana slump forward on the desk, resting their foreheads on their arms, Jasbir has his eyes shut. Their comments are disapproving: Martine says of Caligari, 'it's too slow, it wouldn't scare anyone', and Amarinder wonders whether it was popular at the time - 'because we all fell asleep and you missed quite a lot of the stuff out'. Metropolis receives a slightly more positive response - the modern soundtrack appears to grab their attention, and Jagroop praises the tinting; 'it wasn't in pure black and white, there was all that red and that'. The teacher finishes the class by saying 'thank you for your patience'. When the students have left, he turns to me and says 'oh dear'. I ask him why he said that and he changes tack slightly: 'well, it was all right, we got there in the end'. He adds 'it's a good thing, it's like Shakespeare isn't it, it's a Good Thing // to expose them to that'.*
>
> *From Research Diary Notes, June 1997*

Cary Bazalgette (Principal Education Officer at the British Film Institute) has recently argued that the topic of 'aesthetics and values' has been 'avoided like the plague' in media education and that:

> it really is time to consider whether we are not doing our children a disservice by continuing to pretend that value judgements have no place in media education. Every time I raise this possibility most of my audience blenches at the prospect and instantly assumes that (a) I want to abandon all analysis of institutions and ideology and (b) I want to replace it with a canonical lists (sic) of worthy films by David Lean and James Ivory. I do not want to do either of those things.
>
> (Bazalgette 1998: 6)

Other critics too have pointed to the 'exile' of aesthetic evaluation from cultural and literary studies (Frith 1991; Gripsrud 1989; Smith 1988). Yet Bazalgette's self-portrait as a lone and courageous voice is disingenuous; my analysis of *Making Movies Matter* in Chapter One and the moment of classroom practice described above suggest that these issues continue to be of prime importance

for educators. They may, however, have genuine doubts about their appropriateness and potential elitism in the diverse environments of modern schools. We can see this in Geoff's hesitant framing of the lesson, the fact that he adds it to a course when there is time to fill and his endeavour to pre-empt students' likely responses. A 'neutral' investigative approach, in which meanings and messages could be 'systematically' explored '*irrespective* of (students') own personal feelings and tastes' (Masterman 1980: 20, his emphasis) appeared as one solution. However, even within ideological analysis, evaluation has not gone away - as I suggested in relation to Cherland's work (Chapter Two), it may reappear coded into theoretical arguments. Masterman (one of Bazalgette's implicit targets here) does argue for creating 'new and different forms of enjoyment', as I noted in Chapter One. The NEAB A-Level syllabus that he developed and for which he was Chief Examiner explicitly states that 'evaluation' is an 'assessment objective'. It is defined as: 'the ability to present a personal evaluation of a text and to demonstrate how other audiences variously evaluate texts and issues; the ability to evaluate issues, ideas and arguments on the basis of the available evidence; the ability to evaluate the appropriateness of form and stylistic characteristics of media texts'. The 1997 A-Level examination paper asked students to 'Choose one media genre which particularly appeals to you. Explain why, using detailed examples'.

Issues of evaluation beg questions about the kind of work Media Studies should do and who we want students to be. Bazalgette's article touches on a range of these in a productively incoherent way. Contributors to *Making Movies Matter*, I argued, were centrally concerned to broaden students' horizons, beyond the allegedly narrow range of mainstream Hollywood texts they usually encounter. Yet attempts to define value as content ran aground in the absence of consensus over what a cinematic rather than literary 'canon' could be. The Report also failed to consider how to address it in the classroom; the Models of Learning Progression implied that simply screening particular texts would have inherent benefits for students. In practice, the experience of doing so is often far from immediately or personally gratifying, as Geoff's 'oh dear' indicates. In a manner depressingly familiar to many teachers, students failed to pay attention, were unremittingly negative, or praised modern additions (the colour and

soundtrack) unrelated to what critics hold to be 'influential' and enduring. Rather than appreciation or new pleasures, the outcome appeared to be students' alienation – from the films, from the audiences who watched them at the time of their release, and subsequently, from the teacher who inflicted the texts upon them. Bazalgette places some hope in a technological fix, arguing that new digital media will facilitate comparison of 'aesthetic strategies' such as different soundtracks or editing procedures. As does the NEAB's reference to 'appropriateness of form and stylistic characteristics', she assumes a distinction between form and content as if students can encounter the media 'in themselves', without the contexts, functions and discourses that make them mean. She provides no clues to how teachers might deal with disagreements about the findings of such work, still less deliver answers to the questions of 'moral' value that she attaches to those of aesthetics.

Bazalgette notes that Masterman has recently argued that media teachers should engage in the defence of public service broadcasting (Hart 1998). She herself proposes that their task 'at every level' is to 'initiate better and more credible debate about the quality of drama output', so that audiences can defend the right of broadcasters to take 'creative risks'. For both therefore, in common with the 'activist' educators of *Beyond Blame*, media education is to revitalise the public sphere, creating audiences with the knowledge, skills, habits and virtues to deliberate critically on key issues. Yet this assumes that even students who do not expect to progress to A-Level or beyond do or can be made to care more about their public identities as citizens and scholars than their private or personal ones. Further, as we have seen, the rules of the reigning 'discursive policy' (Bennett 1993: 218) on quality are already highly circumscribed and polarised. If credibility or authority is not a property of arguments, but depends on the contexts in which they are circulated and by whom they are heard, we might wonder what would constitute the conditions under which students' contributions will be considered acceptable.

Bazalgette further seems to advocate a sociological analysis *of* discourses of value, how they are formed, differentiated by age, class and gender, transmitted, regulated, circulated and so on, by whom and to what ends.

Bourdieu famously initiated such a project in *Distinction*, exposing notions of 'pure' and transcendent taste as an ideological project in the service of dominant groups to represent their own preferences as objective, disinterested, universal and asocial (Bourdieu 1984). Taste in his analysis is an effect of cultural capital (the competencies conferred by family, class and education), which serves to perpetuate social inequality. Recent writers have proposed a 'pedagogy of partiality' that would teach how texts get evaluated (Collins 1995). Bazalgette suggests that it is 'interesting and important to know that people make these judgements, that they make different judgements, to investigate the different bases of those judgements and to consider how those judgements are or are not used in marketing, scheduling and indeed in social relations'. It is unclear whether she assumes that students are somehow unaware of their existence, and she does not specify 'for whom' they are interesting and important. Masterman's notion of 'available evidence' implies that assessments relate to factual information (such as, how adequately a news or documentary has covered an issue) rather than social and institutional function. However, their shared emphasis on 'investigating' judgements and their 'bases', on 'demonstrating' and 'presenting' arguments with 'evidence', suggests a pedagogy based on judicial procedures, in which multiple views are advanced, justified, weighed up and accepted or refuted. It envisions the classroom as a place for rational dialogue, free of conflict, positioning students as disinterested individuals, who wish only to understand differences and agree, or 'agree to disagree'. It ignores the relational and intersubjective aspects of taste; others, in this model, are not those against whom we define ourselves, but separate from us, potential objects of knowledge that we can research. Yet if norms of value are not universal but relative to particular social groups, if some popular texts and genres (of which horror might be one example) have aesthetics that are not commensurable with others, we might wonder how conflicting judgements may be reconciled. Neither Bazalgette nor Masterman explain how to locate a single best logic or procedure for resolving differences between parties, or whether consensus will always exclude.

Yet again, Bazalgette argues for considering 'what you are moved by, what you care about, what you choose in preference to something else, what you keep in

your video collection'. Here she rightly identifies the evaluative energies – the making of judgements and the assessment of differences – that animate the experience of popular cultural texts and are a central part of the pleasure they provide (Collins 1995; Frith 1991) and raises key issues about education, consumption and cultural authority. Such an approach would ask students to respond emotively, as fans, and returns to the question posed in Chapter One, of whether Media Studies is capable of encompassing intensity, desire and interestedness. It suggests that consumption is not necessarily alienated and inauthentic, but is a 'positional good' (Lury 1996). Through the commodities we consume, we make choices of one thing rather than another, project relations of self to self and between self and other. Collections (that profoundly enchanting act of consumption, as Walter Benjamin described it) point to an issue that Collins has raised; whether and how new technologies enable individuals to 'archive their own cultural histories', to generate alternative evaluative criteria, and thereby to challenge traditional critical authorities (Collins 1995). Moreover, the media industries themselves construct taste communities, often in conflicting ways to the school. It may be essential to attend to how and why we invest texts with value if media education is to build bridges between the worlds of unofficial culture and the school, rather than to reinforce the split between classroom discourse 'about' a subject matter and the 'discourse of the hallway' with its emphasis on one's feelings about it (Frith 1991: 103, citing Kogan). However, discussing 'what you like and why you like it' (Bazalgette), what 'appeals to you' or your 'personal evaluation' (NEAB) assumes one's values can be transparent to oneself, that one can have access to such self-knowledge. Pleasures are often powerful because they persist despite our consciously held views.

In this chapter I offer accounts of multiple value judgements deployed in classroom practice, across two case studies with one teacher. My interest is in specific educational practices that might make it possible for students to enter into debates about value and other issues that deeply concern them, how their 'voices' may be heard, and how the educational apparatus shapes what they say.

Teacher Aims

In an interview carried out early in the first stage of my research, when I acted as observer, Geoff explained his aims as follows:

Sara: In terms of the horror unit, what are the major aims in terms of what you want students to go away with? What are they going to understand or know about?

Geoff: Obviously one of the main aims is to satisfy the requirements of the Board and they say this thing about a historical run through a genre of some sort (...). From my end, before I try and work out what **they** get out of it, I get out of it, a genre which is aimed very often at young people, which on the surface at least looks appropriate for the people we're working with; it's been around identifiably as horror for a long time, so you get quite a span; I'm quite interested in it which is a help (...). I think it is possible for them to develop arguments from society, and changes in society and how they produce certain kinds of texts and how those texts might change as society changes, and I think there are other arguments you can relate to individual psychology as well and what pleasures they get from the text and so on, and also relate the two as well, so I think there's a lot to think about in horror, and I hope because those opportunities are there it will enable the students to see or to experience hopefully a number of different ways of looking at a text, and over time (....) So it seems a fruitful field really. I also quite like the idea that's it's a fantasy genre as well, it's an opportunity to get away from realism and it invites kids to think about, here's a film we've watched and hopefully enjoyed, but it wasn't real was it, that doesn't happen in real life. So it invites them to think about how, other ways texts work on us rather than some kind of reflecting ideas about what's real. (....). I think it's another way of looking at the generic stuff, you know, subgenres, and how to distinguish one from t'other, what are the generic features and spotting them and how they work, conventions, how important conventions are and how we rely on conventions when we understand a text of any sort and the little triggers that we get early on and then we work from that (....) At the end, I would like them to be able to look at texts and enjoy them, but have a different - a number of ways of looking at them, as social phenomena if you like, as generic sets of conventions, as texts which operate on us as individuals and how that might work, particularly as young people and so on, and ponder what it is that makes us scared and why is that - or why it doesn't make us scared, one of the interesting things is why do we all laugh at horror films especially when they get a bit old, things like that. More specifically, interesting areas are things like heroes, villains, and victims, that's why I'm trying to get them to this idea of, you know, character functions that we were mentioning this morning, how do they work, why are certain sorts of people heroes, villains and victims. It certainly brings us back often to social and ideological themes that things convey. Another interesting thing is how far these films' themes are embedded quite consciously by scriptwriter and director and how often they might not be, they are quite, they are something deeper, they come from broader social concerns and so on. We may not be able

> to distinguish between the two, but I think it's at least possible to theorise about the two possibilities, so I think that enriches a text. If we can do that for the 30s then hopefully they'll be able to then think well OK surely that's happening now, so when we look at a film now, we're looking at it very much in a social context. I think hopefully looking at something from the 30s 50s 60s or whatever might allow that distance to make that conceptual leap.

This interview was relatively formal (it took place in an office during a lunch break) and serious in tone. I address Geoff as a 'teacher', and he responds with relevant categories that account for himself as both competent and knowledgeable (cf Baker 1997). As my question invites, he discusses what he will teach (horror as a genre, one of the 'Studies in Depth' topics on the NEAB syllabus) and why, rather than how. He uses an analytical discourse, theoretical terms, and refers to key debates in Film and Media Studies. (For instance, reflectionism (11-13, 24); auteurism (42-3); ideology (41); character functions (38-40); the audience and reception (14-15, 33-5); the changing experience of horror over time (35-7); genre conventions and understanding (25-9, 32)). Here, I want to explore how Geoff reinflects the 'dominant discourse' of Media Studies in terms that are more familiar to English teaching, which was his own background. Discourse does not equate to practice, and it does not exert influence in a vacuum. Clearly, my retrospective knowledge of his actual teaching influences my reading – although this also shows that meaning and interpretation are always deferred and never exhaustive (cf Hollway 1989).

What Geoff does not say here is as important as what he does. Most notably, he does not speak in hostile terms of 'media power', or of the 'demystified, critical' student as an outcome. Instead, he draws on traditional English discourses about the purpose of literature teaching, emphasising the importance of students' enjoyment and pleasure (14, 22, 30), their 'individual' response (14), that their reading of texts should be enriched by their study (17-8, 31, 47). His hesitation where he corrects 'different' to 'a number of ways of looking' at films (31), indicates a view of education as supplementing rather than supplanting students' existing understandings. By exploring fantasy genres that do not operate through realist criteria (20-2) he may be resisting Masterman's commitment to news and documentary. In this context, 'ideological themes' (41)

seem to signify, not imposed, 'false' beliefs and values, but meaningful expressions of 'social concerns' (45), closer to the mythic or social history approaches to genre discussed in Chapter Two.

His argument that the study of historical texts will enable a 'conceptual leap' to contemporary ones (51-2) stresses analytical distance rather than involvement, and knowledge production and application as separable. It bears a superficial resemblance to the notion of 'critical autonomy', which has often been made to mean radicalised, not just informed and educated, and has associated 'skills' with a degraded vocationalism and technicism. However, in discussing course content and approaches, Geoff more frequently used the term 'transferable skills' instead, which may derive from a more pragmatic conception of the teacher's role, concerned with making students 'competent' to meet the demands of society as it is. It echoes an English emphasis on a set of practices (reading, writing, speaking and listening) rather than concepts to be learnt (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994: 132-6).

Geoff justifies the genre as 'fruitful' for analysis (19), older films as meeting the syllabus requirement to consider 'the historical development of a genre' (5) and as allowing distance (51). Within the parameters I set up, I do not invite him to explain the personal significance of his work or his sense of the inherent value of the texts he teaches. However, he turns around my opening question about outcomes for students, to discuss what he himself gets out of the topic. His biography and social position may be relevant to his pedagogic approaches and evaluations of culture, as many have argued (Bourdieu 1984; Grace 1978; Gripsrud 1989; Richards 1998; Sconce 1995). He was the first from his working class family to go to university, which he did as a mature student. Only there was he able to study history (as part of an English degree), a desire that had been thwarted earlier by the limited range of subject options available at the technical school he left – 'disillusioned' - at sixteen. He had a considerable informal expertise in 'old movies', especially science fiction and horror of the 1950s, on which he was then writing a successful MA dissertation. His later statements about them in classes often suggested that they are not quite 'legitimate' culture, despite the traditional aesthetic criteria by which he argues

they should be judged. Challenging *what* counts as important knowledge, rather than *how* to study it, may articulate some of the contradictions and ambivalences in his own educational and social experience. If teachers' disciplinary backgrounds play a significant role in their interpretation of syllabus requirements, then, they also bring histories and passions of their own, and in neither case should they be treated as mere instruments for delivery of curricula.

The horror course in the first phase

In brief outline, the first horror course took place over eight weeks of two seventy-minute lessons. Students were asked to brainstorm associations with the words 'horror' and 'Frankenstein', and then watched and discussed *Frankenstein* (1931). They considered 'sources' of horror, by thinking of what had scared them when young. They viewed and discussed the final third of *King Kong* (1933), and edited versions of *The Thing From Another World* (1951) and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931). Some time was spent planning an essay on the horror genre and reading an extract from Tudor's *Monsters and Mad Scientists* (1989). Finally, they explored the 'invention' of the teenager in the 1950s and its relevance to horror film production. On two occasions students worked in groups or pairs - the discussion of horror sources and planning the essay; on two they worked on their own - listing word associations and reading the Tudor handout. For the most part, they were invited to contribute to a whole class discussion led by the teacher. The room layout was changed in the second week, from grouped tables to a horseshoe arrangement. This was explicitly designed to allow the teacher to 'keep an eye' on those students who had performed badly in summer exams.

As the interview suggested, much of the course took a structuralist approach to narrative (see Cook 1985, for an account). In response to the films, Geoff generally asked students to discuss character functions (hero, villain, etc), gender representations, equilibrium and closure, 'binary oppositions', genre conventions. These terms had been covered earlier in the A-Level; thus he was able to initiate discussion of character functions by saying 'thinking about this in

a Proppian way', on the basis that 'Propp' was already familiar and meaningful to them. However, I was surprised that he gave very little information about the films, such as directors, dates, context and so on, which I would have expected within a Leavisite, 'auteurist' or social-historical analysis. Nor was much note-taking encouraged; the *process* of discussion seemed to be more important than an outcome in terms of words on the page. I will illustrate his approach through an example from a lesson that followed a viewing of part of *Frankenstein*. Before showing the rest of the film, Geoff asked students to guess how it would end. The request may have derived from an analysis of plot structure as invariant and / or aimed to consider the pleasures of predictable formulaic genres. Here, students are discussing what will happen to the monster:

Khaleel: They give you clues to the reason why he'll die, like you know he's not accepted by others and, it just won't work out
Teacher: Why isn't he accepted?
Khaleel: Because he's / 'different'
Satiajit: He looks, for his size, he looks, er, funny, and er I think he's too - innocent would you say sir?
?: he throws the girl into the water ( )
Teacher: That's interesting, isn't it, cause we're coming round to the - Michael?
Satiajit: Bit childlike?
Teacher: (...) Cause when we described a monster the other day on the board, innocence had nothing to do with it, did it? (...) Seems contradictory doesn't it?
Satiajit: It does but - that showed it really didn't it, when he threw the girl into the water, he didn't mean to - er he was all happy and that, he was laughing, and he picked her up (...) innocent or ignorant maybe
Jagroop: I think more innocent
?: That's innocent isn't it, like a child
Stuart: The monster is innocent, and then he panicked and ran away - 'wooer!', so the monster IS innocent sir
Teacher: So, come on then Stuart
Stuart: It's the creator that's guilty, not the monster
Teacher: So you're saying it's the creator that's guilty not the monster itself - himself (students agree)
Khaleel: We know that, but, but, we can also see it through the creator's eyes and therefore we also know that he had a passion for this rather than to ( )
Martine: It's not the creator's fault either, cause he didn't know how it was going to turn out
(All talk at once. The teacher raises questions about 'Where can we say right and wrong is attached to what Frankenstein has done?' and students debate whether Frankenstein knew the brain he used was an abnormal one, and whether this makes him more or less guilty)

Teacher: Coming back to guilt and innocence - you're saying that the guilt and innocence is in his idea of creating life in the first place, is that what you're saying?
Michael: No, he's not totally guilty in wanting to do that, cause he's, like, a scientist and he's, like, I mean if scientists knew that nowadays I'm sure they'd try and follow it through,
Teacher: And they are!
Michael: well yeah you see, they are, and no one's trying to stop them, it's just the fact that he knew that -
Teacher: Well people are trying to stop them aren't they?
Michael: well yeah
Teacher: I mean there are people now, who question whether scientists should be allowed to be fiddling around with our, you know, genes and this that and the next thing
Amarinder: It's controversial in two ways: he's guilty because, more guilty because he carried on with the experiment, or he's less guilty because he didn't actually want the brain to be abnormal
Satiajit: **No** he is **more** guilty in the story because he knew that it was an abnormal brain (...) and the university man said 'let's end it now', and he said 'no, let him come', and he came onto the stairs and he started moving around, was it? (a question, addressed to the teacher)
Teacher: But he does allow at the end the professor to disassemble him (agreement) (....) So none of this is very straightforward is it, suddenly, Frankenstein, there are certainly two sides to Frankenstein, there are even two sides to the monster as Satiajit was pointing out, in some ways he's as innocent as his victims, and you couldn't get anything that resembles more innocent than the little girl there
Satiajit: Isn't that like *Of Mice and Men*, Lenny?
Teacher: Go on
Satiajit: He's a big well baby you'd call it really, er, he broke, what, Curly's wife's neck, yeah, similar to that, he was just trying to make her be quiet
Teacher: Do you think they're similar stories?
Satiajit: Yeah pretty much, but he wasn't created he was born
Teacher: You might be able to argue that Lenny was created in some ways by society, which doesn't care about him, I know Steinbeck would argue that (....)

Geoff's responses here are flexible, since he sometimes agrees, sometimes challenges and corrects (40, 43). His comments and questions are open and encouraging ('why...', 'that's interesting', 'come on then', 'go on', 3, 8, 21, 62). He summarises, extends and checks interpretations ('so you're saying...', 'is that what you're saying?' 23, 35-6). He notes when students want to talk and curtails his own contributions if they do (9). Overall, there is a quality of kindness in his responses that I observed repeatedly in his teaching and in the general ethos of the school. He did not present himself as a 'friend' or equal of the students, nor as authoritarian, but as sympathetic and courteous (he

frequently addressed classes collectively as 'ladies and gentlemen', as if he were an MC at a variety show). Whilst he rarely overlooked infractions of school rules, inside or outside the classroom, he dealt with them through gentle and often humorous rebukes and exhortations. Students were in turn generally respectful but also familiar (- as we walked through the corridors together, they would call out to him: 'ooh a yellow shirt sir!', or 'we love you sir!'). He exemplified the attributes of the pastoral pedagogue Hunter describes, in which discipline is based, not on overt coercion and intimidation, but on modelling ethical qualities of patience, firmness and evenness of temper (Hunter 1988) (see also Jones 1990). It would not be easy to locate the effects of this teaching at one or other pole of 'repression' or 'liberation'.

The point, as Foucault reminds us, is to explore the productive aspects of any exercise of power. The pedagogy constitutes texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways and students as reading subjects of particular types (Bennett 1983), training students in rituals of interpretation (for instance, those contributions Geoff praises indicate the criteria students need to perform as 'good' Media Studies students). Students discuss proper names as real characters or people, with underlying motivations and intentions, objects of empathy or censure. Khaleel's comment that 'we can also see it through the creator's eyes' (25-6) suggests that the film offers a range of viewpoints and thus a more complex engagement with the world beyond the text. His argument that the monster will be destroyed because he is "different" (4) evokes English pedagogies that use fiction to encourage debate about prejudice or social conflict. Their inter-textual references indicate a grasp of what is relevant knowledge in this context; thus Satiajit mentions Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, a novel that he studied for GCSE. The teacher is pleased with this ('Go on', 62), and indeed, asked a colleague later when it was written, to see how far the comparison could be carried. They volunteer for correction, as Satiajit asks him to monitor his choice of vocabulary (6, 10, 16) - recall here the seating arrangements, for easy surveillance - and construct themselves as serious 'moral agents'. Khaleel, in a later discussion, opined that 'the old films have like, the morals are a bit more er stronger, a bit more broader, and they kind of like make you think about it a bit more, today's ones don't really put the moral

across as much (...). There's **some** morals there, they have some morals, but I don't think it's as deep as it was'.

Although the object here is film rather than literature, I would suggest that this is a literary pedagogy in which textual commentary becomes a process of conscience-formation, whose genealogy Hunter has traced back to the inception of the mass education system (Hunter 1988). The text is used as a means to provoke reflection on social, political and moral issues; the narrative prediction exercise is abandoned when attention turns instead to judgements about the rights and wrongs of characters' actions. Geoff relates the film's 'themes' to contemporary concerns, such as attitudes to science or genetic engineering (45-7) and remarks that their discussion leads them to see that 'nothing is straightforward', that there are 'two sides' to every story (56-7). Together, these suggest discourses of art as transcendence of time and place and as moral ambiguity.

As Gore remarks, the mere fact that teaching imposes norms for conduct, is organised around techniques of moral supervision, or embodies them in unequal relations, does not in itself provide grounds for critique, but simply indicates that it is indeed pedagogical (1993). But it does show that teachers are produced as teaching subjects by technologies beyond individual control and cannot redefine their role by a pure act of will. It should also, as Bennett has argued, warn us against assuming that schools can easily be co-opted to implement political, social or cultural agenda established elsewhere. They will 'confer their own logic and social direction' on the work carried out within them (1993: 225). It also suggests that we question, not whether or not to subject students, but what subjects we produce. As Britzman comments, pedagogy 'always makes available particular identities at the cost of others' (1991: 61).

In interviews, students suggested that 'who' they were required to be in class did not relate to their own viewing practices and preferences. As in the affectionate parody below, they recognised Geoff's knowledge, but posited a gulf between them of both taste and orientation - 'their' films against his; their involvement in

immediate pleasures against his note-taking and analyses; their youth against his age; their interest in spectacle against his orientation to narrative:

> Harmandeep: Well, he knows more than us, but, I can't see how he watches a film and actually likes the film itself, I think he probably analyses it too much, sitting there ( ) (laughing)
> Khalid: When you watch a film, like if you go to the cinema and you watch, if you're watching a horror, you don't sit down and look at the generic features -
> Harmandeep: you don't think, yes, that's equilibrium, yes – (all join in talking and laughing)
> Sara: So what **do** you do then?
> Khalid: you sit down and –
> Harmandeep: you sit down and just watch it! You forget about -
> Khalid: You relax and –
> Harmandeep: You forget about everything -
> Khalid: You enjoy the moment-
> Harminder: You get into the film -
> Khalid: you don't sit down and –
> Harminder: He looks at kind of –
> Khalid: Yeah, what's his favourite, Todorov's theory of (laughing), does it apply here?
> Harmandeep: Yeah you don't look at what the oppositions are!
> (more hilarity) (....)
> Harmandeep: He'd probably take his notes to the cinema!

I argue below that it may be simplistic to accept these oppositions unquestioningly, as I did then; however, we should at least address them if we want to offer pedagogies that are relevant to everyday contexts. In particular, the function – indeed, the value – of the films Geoff showed them were that they exemplified 'bad' horror; students consistently condemned them as 'boring', irrelevant and 'too ancient'. Amarinder commented negatively: 'That *Frankenstein* differs quite a bit from now, horror films nowadays, cause now it's much more blood, much more gore, much more stuff that was good, that didn't even look scary to me'. Dina condemned the special effects of *King Kong*: 'in modern films, the special effects get to the point where it actually makes it seem real - you wouldn't be scared by that, or anything, you'd think "what a load of crap"'. Khaleel's views on moral decline bore little resemblance to those he offered in informal contexts. Thus, although (some) students engaged on the terms the teacher offered, they often did so only partially, while others did not

participate at all[1]. For instance, they consistently failed to hand in notes or the essay[2]; spent much of the lesson time scribbling notes to each other, doodling, or sleeping; when they did write industriously and constantly throughout the lesson, it generally turned out that they were copying up essays for other subjects. On occasion, they adopted more explicitly subversive tactics, such as mockery of other students or blanking the teacher's questions: Shahana responded to Geoff's request to comment on the 'morals' of *The Thing* by laughing and saying 'Morals? Umm / I don't know about morals... I can't actually remember what happens', and later asked truculently 'Sir, can you define the word morals, please, because I think some of us don't know what you mean?' Disciplinary discourses do not, of course, necessarily produce disciplined subjects (Donald 1992: 47).

The essay: what horror 'has to offer'

For the purposes of this chapter I want to explore in more detail the specific debates about cultural value that went on around the essay title: *'Horror films are the worst kind of popular entertainment, just cheap screams for kids'. Based on the movies we have watched in class, how far do you feel this is an adequate description of what the horror genre has to offer?* As Bazalgette suggests teachers should, Geoff explicitly asks students to engage in a discourse of value, since the essay refers, not to the genre's effects, ideologies or violence, but what it means, what it 'has to offer'. The fact that it was to be assessed induced a particular anxiety in students, as they struggled to ascertain what the teacher wanted them to say. Although some class time was taken up with requesting information about the appropriate academic conventions (which terms in the title they should 'define', for example), their difficulties stemmed

[1] My examples suggest that degrees of participation were gendered, in that male students were more likely to engage, and female to 'resist'. Many critics have pointed to the gender and race bias of canonical methods of study (Owens 1992). However, the ethnic composition of the groups and Pearl, discussed below, suggests that social class may override such factors. I do not want to imply that these issues are irrelevant or unworthy of extended discussion; however, at this point my focus is on developing pedagogies that allow fuller involvement by all students

[2] In the end the essays 'disappeared' and I am unable to discuss them.

mainly from the fact that they were unable or unwilling to evaluate the films in the way the teacher required. Their constant questioning forced Geoff to explain more explicitly what he thought they had learnt. For instance:

Teacher: I think the wider point here, because that opinion // or something like that, you could probably find somebody would say that somewhere about virtually any kind of popular entertainment, anything you know, that ( ) would churn out, so if we take those kinds of statements at face value, why are we here doing Media Studies? We study rubbish or what? If it's all that slight, if it means nothing, why bother? OK? Now I'm assuming that because we're all here, we must be looking for something MORE than what that statement suggests. SO! What could that be? / Try again.

Teacher: We've been able to look at those films and, and, er, I think they still stand the test of time, though you wouldn't put them on general release / but what I'm trying to say is if you agree, there are a number of things we can say about what's happening in horror films, OK, which are quite on top of entertainment and cheap screams, yeah? I would suggest that there's MORE to those films // and we can see more in them than just a straightforward narrative and some special effects
Lianne: So it doesn't matter if they're scary or not?
(....)
Teacher: Ladies and gents, listen ( ) is horror more than a / ground level // movie?
Martine: What do you mean?
Teacher: There's nothing in the film that's worth discussion or analysis, yeah,
Satiajit: There is
Teacher: There IS! Right! Good, there's a LOT, it's what we spent the last three weeks talking about isn't it?
Satiajit: It's just, horror's a way of presenting different themes and I mean-
Teacher: - Excellent, yes
Satiajit: If you look beneath it, if you look beneath it there's a lot of things there like, there's a lot of, in *Frankenstein*, there's a lot of umm, whether, you know, bringing people back from the dead is good or not, and, if you think it's superficial, well, there's something wrong with you innit?
Teacher: Let's take that as a starting point, what I'd like you to do is, if you've got some paper, is to start thinking what ARE these then, these themes? (....) so let's start making a list of what there is in these films, which we might say you know are interesting, important, / worthwhile, // any ways in which these movies could be said to rise above this very low level that it's, they've been accused of

The metaphors here posit one unitary cultural hierarchy in which popular culture must measure up to the standards of high art. What is 'slight', 'ground' or 'low' level is opposed to what is 'more', 'rises above', is 'on top of' or elevating (6, 16-7, 34-5, 11-2, 34). In the essay title, 'screams', as inarticulate or uncontrollable

responses, are implicitly contrasted to discussion and thinking (associated with the mind, not the body). 'Cheap' suggests effects that are easily obtained by a commercial apparatus, opposed to the difficulty and rigour of art. Moreover, elite and mass cultures are associated with separate classes; Geoff characterised those making such statements elsewhere as 'snobbish' people who 'look down their noses at such things'. He then invites students to challenge these taste hierarchies through simple reversal of the terms: that the films are classics that 'stand the test of time', 'have more to them', are 'interesting, important, and worthwhile' (8, 12, 33). His imagined subject of Media Studies seeks profundity of meaning, something 'more' than cheap screams or 'rubbish' (5-8), and is motivated by outrage at the unfairness of these judgements.

The students, however, are not these subjects - which is no doubt why Geoff is so relieved when Satiajit finally appears to come up with the goods he wants, even if his comprehension of the ethics of *Frankenstein* (28) is somewhat hazy. For these students, the media were an ongoing part of their lives, not necessarily separate from their future careers or identities. In interviews they often explained that they chose Media Studies because it might help them get a job in the media, or because they had done well at GCSE; some were more interested in the units on advertising and marketing than film. 'Entertainment' was often enough in itself, as they indicated when they said they had just hoped to 'enjoy' the subject. The sense of cultural inferiority with which Media Studies teachers of Geoff's generation or age might have come to the discipline has been largely dissipated. Many critics attribute this to television, which in creating a mass audience has challenged linear hierarchies and binary oppositions and redistributed access to cultural capital (Collins 1995; Frith 1991; Frow 1995). This may be read as indicating 'a genuine democratisation in the sphere of culture' (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994: 214) – although I will suggest below that this might be rather optimistic.

Thus Lianne's puzzled question about whether scariness 'matters' (14) seeks to establish the legitimate reading framework for the essay, but suggests that she

does not share it. With another group, the teacher's provocative rephrasing of the title – that 'succeeded' with Satiajit – gained the following response:

Teacher: what that quotation seems to be saying is, that this is very cheap, low grade popular entertainment // yeah, designed just to // provoke the kind of cheap gut reaction in an audience, yeah, OK? Right! So there's nothing in these films, right? Nothing more than that in these films? // Do we agree with that? // (silence)
Emma: Those particular ones, I hated, the ones we saw, they were rubbish /
Teacher: Those ones were rubbish?
Emma: the actual storylines, I hated em / but you can get really good ones, cause, did you see *Scream*, the film? (turning to address Sarah to her right)
Teacher: Yeah hang on here though, we'll be talking about sixty years' difference (laughter)
Emma: No, but I'm saying, if you had to base it on that, you'd think -
Teacher: You are having to base it on this
Emma: Then you'd say yeah, there's nothing in em
Teacher: Right, so is that a problem of those films or of your ability to understand them, or - I mean, why - you might not've liked em, but you HATE them?
Emma: No, cause it was nothing to do with like, how you do yer camera angles n all of that, it was just the actual storyline, I just sort of sat there, falling asleep, and *Frankenstein*, I missed it, I just totally switched off
Teacher: So it's the age of these movies
Emma: I think it is, sorry about that
(....)
Teacher: I fully er accept your response to those movies, you find you don't like em, for whatever reasons, that's fair enough, OK, / but umm, // but we can still analyse them, yeah? (....)
Debbie: I was just going to say, you know when like the Freddy films were made, cause they were made quite a long time ago as well, not like the 90s or anything, but they're, they're scary, they're like, they were made in the 70s weren't they
(there is some debate about the dates)
Debbie: no, but it IS scary, even though it's old, and it's cause, the gore and all the blood
(other voices join in, demanding to watch films such as *Candyman* and *Stephen King's It*)
Sarah: My sister was so scared she cried!

Geoff tries to explain such vehement reactions as arising either from Emma's own failure of comprehension or the age of the films (17-8, 23), but neither account is fully accepted by the class. Emma acknowledges that other, aesthetic, criteria exist - 'how you do yer camera angles and all that' (20-1) - but refuses them as *sufficient* for ascribing value to horror. Debbie suggests that physicality in content (gore, blood) and affect (fear) is not only part of the

generic terrain but is also the *necessary* criterion of judgement, citing a film that is also 'old', by her standards, yet still delivers (29-35). The teacher is unable to engage with them, since they return evaluation to the terms that he is rejecting in arguing that there is more to these films than 'just' screams, and is forced to request they are put aside in order to 'analyse' (28). .

Frith suggests that the contemporary cultural field is organised by a threefold division between an art discourse, a folk discourse, and a popular discourse (1991). The first relates to cultural experience as transcendence of time, place, body, the everyday; the second, to culture as a means of integration within a community, place or time; and the third, to cultural experience as 'fun', 'legitimized emotional gratification'. As I read it at the time, students' insistence on the primacy of the visceral meant that aesthetic criteria had no sovereignty in relation to horror, but that discourses of the folk and the popular alone were applicable. In the next section, I will explain how I amended the course the following year in line with this perception.

Teaching Horror, Phase Two

The changes I proposed to the course were aimed at moving it from a 'text-centred' to a more 'audience-centred' and 'everyday life' approach in which the focus would be on culture as a broader set of social relations and activities. I hoped to achieve a more socially located understanding of the meanings and functions of horror viewing, and connect with wider debates. For instance, students' reflection on their own relation to horror would necessitate taking a critical distance from arguments about its effects, which are always seen as acting on 'other people', whilst also making them aware that their own individual uses of such films were socially patterned. Thus we began with 'audience research' activities, in which students discussed their own consumption of horror films, asked others about theirs, and read an article by David Buckingham on horror audiences. We used more contemporary texts, and broadened the field of study from films alone to industry strategies (publicity, video covers and posters, etc). Geoff also devised a film production simulation, discussed at the end of the chapter. The course thus covered sections on audience, text and industry as the

syllabus requires and genre theories suggest. Since he was keen not to sacrifice the historical element of the course completely, I compiled a video consisting of some 45 minutes' worth of short clips from older horror films, accompanied by a handout that described 'The History of Horror' across the decades. Although practical criticism was still a focus, we stressed more collaborative ways of working, where students shared knowledge with each other as well as with the teacher. We set work that invited them to speak in different ways to diverse audiences – as well as essays, they were asked to write a magazine article about horror, and to present a film 'pitch'. Greater mutuality was to be achieved by positioning the teacher as 'learning' from students. He screened *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) because students in the previous year had named it as an example of a 'good' horror film, and *Scream* (1996) because students clamoured to see it when they saw it in his possession, despite the fact that he had not previously seen either. The course ran for eleven weeks rather than the eight of the previous course.

My (implicit) definition of value was what is 'popular', that is, able to carry a range of meanings and to be appropriated by diverse audiences, of which horror seemed to me to be a clear example. I assumed that if students were invited to talk about the films they had seen, they would automatically realise that the teacher valued them, and that we would therefore validate learning derived from informal cultural experience, rather than excluding it in favour of academic knowledge. Although I was barely aware of it, what I saw as a contemporary 'audience-centred' approach may in fact have been influenced by a longer culturalist tradition of celebratory populism. In the discourses of the gross, gory and scary, I believed I had found students' authentic voice that the previous course had silenced or distorted in exchange for accreditation or academic rewards (on debates about 'voice' in pedagogy, see Ellsworth 1994 (1988)). I wanted to allow it to be 'heard' more loudly in the classroom, by introducing 'their' texts, and then to interpret its meaning.

Classroom Practice

In general terms, students appeared to be more engaged with the course; during screenings they watched attentively, in discussions they took fuller notes, as though feeling that the content of lessons was relevant to them, and there were no outbreaks of dissent as in the previous year. Geoff said at one point 'you've nudged me on a way since last year haven't you?', and concluded 'it's been quite a jolly term' in his final interview with me. Since he was not familiar with the recent films we used, he was more detached from students' responses, but he praised them for similar features he valued in the older ones. He commented several times, in and out of class, that they had 'deep themes', were 'multi-layered' and 'clever texts' that could be read in a number of ways[3]. He drew students' attention to a classroom scene in *Nightmare on Elm Street*, which comments reflexively on the 'violence' of high cultural texts such as Shakespeare. He was pleased at the students' response to the history tape, especially when two students asked to borrow the whole films from which extracts had been shown. He spoke about 'text, inter-text and context' as a frame through which he would teach horror subsequently, and expressed an interest in developing the work on industry.

However, the course did not produce the results I expected. As Guillory warns, 'to have drawn up a new syllabus is not yet to have begun teaching, nor is it yet to have begun reflection upon the institutional form of the school' (1993: 38). What follows is a reflection on the 'mysterious gap between hope and happening' (Kenway and Willis 1998), which I will argue was produced largely by my failure to theorise the school as an institution or the function of students' evaluative judgements.

Geoff began the horror unit by asking students to write a list of all the horror films they had seen, and to discuss 'memorable moments' from them with a

[3] This point deserves developing, although space precludes me doing so here. In Chapter Two I noted that critics have argued that modern horror makes a focus on traditional features of narrative structure, character development and moral messages (etc) irrelevant. Yet Geoff's approach transferred easily and productively...

partner. The noise levels in the classroom went up as students embarked on this task with enthusiasm:

> Saman responds to the request by shouting out 'About three! I used to get scared, I never used to watch them!' However, in her notes she eventually lists over seventeen... Some students concentrate on deciding genres and appropriateness of labels: Bhardeep queries whether *Stephen King's It* could be included, on the grounds that it wasn't a film, since it was on TV in two parts. 'That was brilliant, the only thing that ever spooked me out' she says, talking about the theme of clowns which are familiar to children and yet evil. Students make their lists collectively, reminding each other of titles: '*The Lost Boys*?' - 'Oh yeah that was WICKED!'. Gary jokes: 'Sir, I'm not really old enough to have seen any of these films'. Tajinder describes *Scream*, talking with relish about someone being tied up and gagged. Saman too tells Faye about it, trying to remember the name of the actor, Drew Barrymore: 'the insides are all outside... he only kills the girls who aren't virginal...' Gary asks his corner if they've seen *Angel Heart* or *Blacula* - Chris cries out 'I don't know where you see these films!'. Pearl, seated next to him, lists some 28 films, including such obscure titles as *Rabid Grannies*.
>
> When I look at their written notes later, they reveal a certain pleasure in the visceral and spectacular aspect of horror - eg: '*Dusk till Dawn* is really outrageous and doesn't hold anything back. There's a lot of killings and blood sucking which adds to the adrenaline rush and even fear...' (Chris).
>
> *From Research Diary notes, Summer 1998*

These discussions echoed the evaluations made by students in the previous term, prioritising the intensity of experience the films offer and their closeness to the body in imagery and affect. However, the tone set by the whole class feedback was quite different. Geoff asked who had heard a 'remarkable account'. Amy started to answer but then demurred - 'well, I dunno'. Pearl then offered *Seven* (1995) and he asked 'what was remarkable about that then?'

> Pearl: Because it was / a challenge, as well as a horror film, it wasn't just / some guy goes psycho, kills loads of people and you get scared by it but at the end of the film there's ( ), it was that, as well, but it also made me think a lot about / things, and I also / even though you're not meant to, do you know what it's about?
> (*she describes the plot and names the actors in it*)
> it was more, more than a horror film that scares you, you had to think about it, it was like / in, the thing that people like about murder mysteries, because it's a challenge, because you don't know what's happening (Teacher: Sure) and like you have to think in your own head what's going on, and you have that as well

Teacher: So in a sense it was a bit of a hybrid, you remember we looked at the umm / the er *Crime Traveller*, wasn't it, that had elements of more than the one genre, and you're saying that this combination in *Seven* of the crime thriller and the horror movie was very - appealing
Pearl: Yeah, advanced horror
Teacher: Yes, advanced horror, interesting, umm -
Pearl: It was original as well, there's nothing else that does things like that, usually horror films are just, guy goes a bit psycho for no reason, like, or in *Halloween*, guy goes a bit psycho cause something happened before, like Freddie Kruger goes mad because they killed him, and it's just all these little things, something's happened because of this, and that's the way it is for ever, and it's like, this thing was to do with religion, which hasn't been used before, like, in that way, that it was because he was such a great person, and he was so / to do with his religion ( )
Teacher: In a sense though would you say, part of your meditation on his motives might have been, would you say that he not only was a religious person but in a sense he thought he was god? - because he was in a sense doing god's work / of vengeance?
Pearl: Yes, but I mean, obviously he's not a good person for doing it, but I just liked the fact that / instead of it, like all the other horror films, just being a baddie who kills and he's proud of it, this guy was proud that he killed, because for him it was for a good reason
Teacher: Yeah so it was the motivation itself that was interesting (...)
Pearl: They also like, the ending wasn't / it didn't, there wasn't an ending ( ) there wasn't an ending made so that you could like sleep at night, it was like a, something just to leave you to think about it, and I prefer things like that, something that's not ended properly, like, that makes you think rather than something that ended properly, either for the reason that / it's a shame that like horror films have to like, either end stupidly so that they can have a sequel, or end nicely so that people don't get scared of things ( )
Teacher: Yes, so this one avoided both of those things. Interesting. Anyone else see *Seven*?
Saman: yes
Teacher: Did you share some of Pearl's reactions?
Saman: Definitely, it, I think it's the only horror film that actually makes you think, it's like, you have to follow it with er ( ) to follow it, and the ending's really shocking. I think the ending's one of the best parts of the film, it's really well made
Teacher: (....) what was it about the way it was made then?
Pearl: The main thing that I was saying to Amy was the fact that they showed / things that you like / even that just a year ago they wouldn't have, and I really liked the fact that - even though it was sick, you know, and I'm never going to be the same person again - it was really nice to know that they - it was almost like they were informing me, I think, I know it doesn't happen, it doesn't happen like, everyday, but that you do HAVE them, and because of like / just because of laws about the press and laws about / what, what certain people in high positions are allowed to tell you, it like, it went past that and actually showed you exactly what a serial killer can do and it showed you all the sick things that like parents don't let you see, and I'm glad that I saw it. (....) and it like conjured up sort of

thoughts in your mind where you could see exactly what happened even though they hadn't shown it, and it was just / that all the camerawork was really good and the filming techniques were really good as well
Amy: It was like emotionally disturbing, the end, I was like, I almost started crying with like, how could they do that?

The teacher's request seems to have been interpreted as meaning that he does not want to hear about run-of-the-mill genre films, but 'remarkable' texts – and remarkable students. Hence Amy hesitates, and Pearl structures her description of *Seven* around this distinction. She offers not a description of experience (a 'memorable moment') but a considered evaluation in which she mobilises the dichotomous terms of high and low, mind and body, just as Geoff invited students in the previous course to do. 'Advanced' horror films, which are a 'challenge', about which you 'have to think in your own head' and are informative (1, 4, 10, 16, 56), are opposed to ordinary ones that just 'scare you' and 'end nicely' (7, 41). Originality (14), the one-off, motivation (23) the power of suggestion (not showing, 64) are compared to the formulaic, predictable, where sequels are allowed for (40-1, 22-3). Enduring impact (55) is contrasted to the ephemeral nature of films after which you can 'sleep at night' (36). Her judgements would support Frith's claim that 'the crucial high/low conflict is not that between social classes but that produced by the communication process itself at *all* "levels" of cultural expression (Frith 1991: 109). She makes distinctions within the genre, rather than between whole cultural domains, as the essay title demanded of students. The atmosphere of the classroom returns to seriousness as other students adjust to the agenda that she sets. Saman, who had been enthusiastically describing *Scream*'s disembowelling scene, calls *Seven* the 'only' film that makes her think (47-8), and Amy talks of her emotions (tears, 66-7).

For Geoff, as we saw, the text is a means to reflect on social or moral issues through consideration of character, theme, viewpoints and so on. He therefore invites her to 'meditate' on the killer's motivations (26-7). Yet Pearl's response suggests that the value of the religious motif lies in its ability to distinguish this film from 'all the other horror films' (31); *Seven* is a 'positional good' (Lury 1996: 46) that marks her social position and cultural style *vis a vis* other consumers. As Bourdieu suggests, she exercises taste for the purpose of distinction. She

thus brings into being multiple 'others', displaced beyond the classroom; cultural dopes who cannot withstand what is sick, who need to sleep at night, who unthinkingly ask for no more than to be scared (36-42). However, whilst she uses aesthetic terms that Bourdieu would identify as characteristic of 'pure' taste, valuing form (camerawork and techniques, 64-5) over function (fear), and so on, they do not serve (only) to position her as distanced and detached. She speaks with the commitment of the fan who feels grateful to a text ('I'm glad that I saw it', 62) that takes her seriously, is on her side against 'certain people in high places' and parental figures who would deny her knowledge and access to information (59, 61-2). She implies that her whole self is bound into the experience: 'I'm never going to be the same person again' (55). The obvious question that arises, in relation to Bazalgette and Masterman's proposals for the study of 'personal evaluations', is how appropriate it is to subject such passionate preferences to reasoned debates about their validity and grounding.

When Geoff then asked for other contributions, Gary offered Balal's choice of memorable film, *Nightmare on Elm Street*, at which the other students laughed – with seeming unease and embarrassment. Within the terms established by Pearl, in which it figures as inferior, one of 'all the other' films, naming it seemed to risk humiliation. Gary then commented, 'The reason why was, I remember from primary school, seeing it when I was about nine and it was the first horror film I'd seen, and now, we look back fondly, it's, with a smile you know, it's quite funny'. Saman challenged him: 'you might, I still get scared!', but he continued, 'So I thought it was quite funny, you know, how we laugh about how we were scared and how it's quite a frightening film even though it is silly'. As my notes above indicate, Gary had already staked out a claim to an identity as one who has seen rare titles such as *Blacula* (1972). Although he uses the film ironically rather than 'straight' as Pearl used *Seven*, his relation to the text is similar, in that it signifies the transition from childhood to adulthood, and positions him as mature and reflective. Pearl joined in, describing how she had changed from seeing it as 'scary' to seeing it as 'tacky'. When Geoff asked why, she replied emphatically 'we've grown up'.

From my perspective, the lesson did not go as planned. I was irritated with Pearl, initially attributing this to her 'domination' of class time. My 'will to truth' was exposed when I showed the extracts (my diary notes and her contribution) to other teachers. I expected them to identify the 'problem' of the obvious discrepancy between the authenticity of the popular discourse used in the pair work, and the evaluative agenda then set by Pearl; instead, they found Pearl's views thoughtful, interesting and valid. Both they and I may only have looked for what we wanted; in my case, this was confession of perverse pleasures in the visceral and taboo – talk of *Rabid Grannies*, not *Seven*.

I had overlooked the inevitably social functions of discourses of emotion (Harre 1986). Many of the films they were invited to talk about were associated with a child self which as teenagers they were now trying to leave behind, and were not, therefore, a direct source of knowledge that could be unproblematically articulated in the classroom. At the very least, it might have made more sense to ask them to reflect on their changing relationship to such films, why horror functioned in a certain way in particular times and places, but not in others, in order to explore the contradictions in their experience. However, this too may have 'failed' to deliver what I sought. In evaluation interview they frequently argued that what was good about the course was not the films themselves, but 'analysing' them, 'laughing at them' (Chris), or revisiting past pleasures. 'Yeah, it was good watching all of that, it was good watching it again, it was (sighs), it's really nostalgic' (Tajinder). Geoff shared my surprise: 'amazing, isn't it', he said after I had sent him a summary of the evaluation comments, 'we do all that work on the films, and they're still wondering if it's OK to like them'.

Guillory has made some stringent criticisms of multi-culturalism's claims that teaching non-canonical texts ensures affirmation of the cultures from which they come (Guillory 1993). He argues that the debate about the (literary) canon has been conceived in terms of a liberal-pluralist and 'imaginary' politics of representation, in which particular authors are supposed to stand in for dominant or subordinate social groups. It assumes a homology between 'the process of *exclusion*, by which socially defined minorities are excluded from the exercise of power or from political representation, and the process of *selection*,

by which certain works are designated canonical, others non-canonical' (6). He suggests that what is encountered in the academy or the school can never be 'culture' in the ethnographic sense of 'ways of life', but only in the sense of culture as reified product. All texts are constructed and legitimated as objects of study in the same ways, by 'a process of deracination from the actual cultural circumstances of their consumption and production' (43). My own changes to the syllabus can be read as this kind of liberal gesture - in which marginalised groups, this time 'young people', are to be invited in to the academy and find themselves reflected - without querying what relationship to that culture they might have there.

Guillory draws on Bourdieu to claim that the content of cultural capital is arbitrary, serving simply to mark who has it and who hasn't. The focus of political struggle should be shifted away from particular texts and authors to the level of the school, which he claims reproduces the social order by regulating access to the cultural capital it provides. I would argue that the content of the syllabus matters more than he allows; changing it did alter some of the social relations of the classroom, in a way that few teachers would happily forego. However, students were certainly more interested in the symbolic value of the education school provides, in Bourdieu's sense of its capacity to draw a distinction between oneself and others, than I was. (The relatively 'elite' nature of A-Level study, and the generally middle class composition of the group, may both be relevant here). Students often expressed surprise that they had been studying horror films at all, rather than factual or more obviously 'popular' genres (the news, soap opera), about which, perhaps, one can adopt a more overtly 'critical' stance. Those students who did express enjoyment of the course felt that they had gained by becoming able to watch horror films in a different - 'more intelligent' - way. Pearl, however, responded to my question about whether her opinion of horror had changed through her study as follows:

> Pearl: I've realised that they're cheesier than they actually are (laughter) (...) I mean, *Halloween*, I would have just watched it and thought, that's a bit crap, and like *Scream*, I would have just watched it and just / cried because it's so pathetic, but now I sort of just want to go and kill everyone because it's SO bad, I just realised HOW bad it is
> Sara: Really?

Pearl: Yeah, cause like, there's stuff, there's obvious stuff, like if I said to someone who's got no idea about Media Studies, what is it that you're scared about, they'd be able to / pinpoint things like, feeling that they had at a certain point, but like, now that we - I know even MORE about it now, that I can even perceive even more how bad it is, like worse than I thought some of them were
Sara: So do you mean by bad, written to a formula?
Pearl: Yeah, yeah, like you always know what's going to happen
Sara: Right - cause you've watched quite a lot of horror films haven't you
Pearl: (Not -
Sara: (that struck me that you had quite an extensive list
Pearl: I have, I don't really like them, I don't - I mean, I don't watch them as much as someone who - probably likes them, but like, if they're on then I always end up watching anyway, / just, cause I can't stop watching TV (laughs) out of habit, no, I just sit down and if there's something crap on I'll watch it anyway, just to watch it, sort of thing

Her reservations about the course seem to rest on a sense that it had not provided access to a specialist knowledge; that what they had discussed was 'obvious', that someone unfamiliar with Media Studies practices could also answer the questions they had considered (why films are scary) (8-9). My comment about the number of films that she has seen (15, 17) is barbed; it might position her as an 'expert' whose knowledge should be celebrated, but it might also attempt to undermine her by exposing her inconsistency. She draws defensively on the readily available discourse of 'telly addict' who watches anything, to distinguish herself from those who 'probably like' the films (19). Rather than understanding herself as part of a broader social formation, she uses the course violently to differentiate herself from the ignorant others whom she now wants to 'go and kill' (4) for not realising the films are 'cheesier than they actually are' (1) – a telling turn of phrase.

The 'History of Horror' tape and handout were seized on by many students to serve this function of distinction. The handout, for instance, drew on books such as *The Aurum Encyclopaedia of Horror* (Hardy 1985), and named 'notable' films from each decade from the 1920s onwards. I offered no consideration of how such histories get constructed, of the basis on which claims for legitimacy are made, or the re-evaluations to which horror films are subjected by successive generations. In terms of 'reading formation', the extracts perhaps enabled students to place films differently in relation to each other. Thus, in a reversal of

the previous case study, when I asked what students would have liked to study in the class, many said they would like to see more 'classic' or 'alternative' horror films:

Faye: I wanna watch, I don't know, more alternative ones, like different films, that people, no one's heard of really, I just feel that I wanna go and, / say, I'm not going to watch something like *Scream*, // but, something alternative, where, the routine, like you said, a bit of -
Sara: Right, so you'd like to expand what you see, can you think of any examples of film titles that you've heard of that might be alternative?
Pearl: I wanna watch all the ones in the history of horror, they looked pretty good
Sara: Like?
Pearl: Like *Nosferatu*, that looks wicked (laughs) that looks really good
Gary: That is so good! (....)
Faye: Anything, different film, not just normal, run of the mill ones
Gary: It's made me more -
Sara: So *Scream* and *Nightmare on Elm Street*, you would call sort of normal?
Faye: It's the first time I've ever watched them, // the last, the last time (laughs)
Sara: You're not going to watch any more?
Faye: Na, not those films, I don't wanna
Sara: Really?
Faye: Ye::ah - they're not that - they did make me jump, OK, I did jump quite a lot, and / but I wouldn't really watch - like if I went out to the you know video shop, and actually pick one up

Arguing that the course has changed their tastes and expanded their horizons suggests it has achieved what *Making Movies Matter* urges media education to do. Yet Faye (in particular) seems to be saying what she thought I wanted to hear ('like you said', 4), which raises questions about who she thinks I am. She probably also monitors herself in accordance with her knowledge of Pearl and Gary's expressed views. She suggests that she still evaluates the films on the same basis (of whether or not they make her jump), and the crucial issue is that she is keen not to be seen in public – in the video shop – with them (22-3). Talking about films 'no one' has heard of (2) raises a question about who these imagined others are. As might be expected, then, my evidence suggested that there was a dissonance between students' classroom discourses and their viewing practices. Consider this comment from Chris in response to my question about whether his opinion of horror had changed:

> I think I despise it more now, cause, like before, I didn't really have an opinion, I didn't like it because I didn't really watch em, but now that I've

> watched em, / I don't like em, and I've got a reason for not liking em, and it's just, they're not believable and / all that. So yeah, I'll probably, probably never watch em again now (laughs)

A few minutes later in the interview, Chris tells me that he bought *Scream* on video as soon as it came out, as well as having watched it at the cinema. 'I suppose because there's loads of us that went to it, and, we just had such great times, I thought, yeah, might as well buy it and / watch it again'. Within the practices of cinema going, Chris valued *Scream* for its capacity to give pleasure and integrate the group. But in the context of this classroom and this school, compelling students to voice their opinions, as Chris suggested the course made him do, produces (some) horror as despicable culture in order that students can present themselves as non-conformist and individualised (cf Widdicombe and Wooffitt 1995). (As I will show in Chapter Six, Kate's students responded differently). My 'audience-centred' approach assumed that language was a neutral conduit to import accounts of experience from outside the classroom and ignored how students might perceive the risks and costs involved. Had I recognised the practice of exhorting self-revelation as an exercise of power, as Foucault's work suggests, I might perhaps have anticipated that students would produce fictions related instead to their readings of the power relations of the school.

To understand the debates about value in the two stages of the research, John Frow's concept of 'regimes of value' may be helpful. It is similar to Bennett's 'reading formation' (Chapter Two), but concerned with the ascribing of value rather than interpretation. Evaluative regimes, he argues, are relatively autonomous of and have no directly expressive relation to social groups: they are 'institutions generating evaluative regularities under certain conditions of use, and in which particular empirical audiences or communities may be more less fully imbricated' (Frow 1995: 144). Judgements of value are always choices made within a particular regime, which will specify a particular range of possible judgements and set of appropriate criteria (and exclude others); thus apparently identical texts and readers will function quite differently within different regimes. Read in this way, my error was to romanticise students' evaluations in the first phase of the research as fixed principles that expressed

an essential 'youth' cultural relationship to popular media. They may better be understood as a tactical response to contest the subjectivities they were invited to assume. Against 'morals', 'themes' and 'issues' they counterposed the bodily, spectacular and fun, but their value lay in their specific subversive power in a context where the teacher explicitly forbade them. In the second phase, small group discussions allowed texts to function within popular or folk regimes, since students were invited to speak as 'fans', members of audiences or peer group culture. In the whole class, however, they produced evaluations oriented to what was felt appropriate to the institution, where the unitary hierarchy of taste continues to 'exercise vestigial force' (Collins 1995: 193) and which served to project themselves as mature and as discriminating individuals, possessors of superior knowledge and judgements.

Creating Diverse 'Regimes of Value'

In itself, however, the fact that texts are 'polyvalued' in this way suggests a way forward. I will conclude with an account of a lesson that I will argue was successful because it pluralised the value judgements that could be heard. The course ended with a 'film industry simulation'. Geoff asked students to prepare and present a 'pitch' for a horror film, to himself as 'Mr. Lolly', a film financier, and to the rest of the group. They could develop their own ideas, but he also supplied them with a 'portfolio' of suggestions to inspire them, such as an article on genetically-modified 'Frankenstein' foods, the cover of Patricia Cornwall's novel *Post Mortem* and plot outlines of old horror films they could remake. They then had to propose how they might promote the finished product.

Pearl, Amy, Gary and Faye presented ideas for *Visions of Destiny*, an amalgam of *Post Mortem* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* that they described as a 'psychological thriller'. It was to star Susan Sarandon as 'Jacqueline Hyde', a detective who has visions of serial killings (to be depicted in similar ways to those in *Seven*) that she turns out to have committed herself (a narrative twist borrowed from *Angel Heart*). Another group opted to remake *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954) as *'Negra Laguna'*, a 'horror romance' to be set in Brazil, with an ecological message about the dangers of destroying natural habitats. It

was primarily designed to be a star vehicle and acting debut for Mariah Carey, of whom one of the group, Zachariah, was well known as an avid fan; students greeted the proposal with good-natured groans.

The exercise was able to disrupt the seriousness of previous discussions and to allow a measure of playfulness into the classroom instead. Further, 'older' texts no longer signified as exemplars of the best or the worst from which there had now been a tragic decline or fortunate progress. Their 'value' lay in how far they could be useful; whether they could be reworked, renovated, quoted in relation to other, more familiar texts, shown to be malleable enough to fit students' other interests, passions and knowledge. (Arguably this is the strategy that contemporary media texts also take; one witty, horror-related example is *The Simpsons'* version of *King Kong*, where the roles are perfectly adaptable to the existing characters – Homer as the ape, Marge as Fay Wray, and Mr Burns as Denham the exploiter, and so on). Secondly, different 'economies of evaluation' as Collins describes them circulated at the same time. *Visions of Destiny* appropriated conventional signifiers of prestige – plot complexity and subtlety, historical referent, literary value, independence or uniqueness of 'vision' rather than commercial appeal. Even so, it acknowledges other, necessary evaluative economies, such as the need for star appeal. *Negra Laguna* imagined a different valuing public: Zachariah's description of how Carey should play her scenes with the creature invited evaluation by fans of their emotional impact and consonance with the star image of Carey the performer. The teacher's knowledge was also put to use in a different way, by, for instance, describing Susan Sarandon's earlier role as a vampire in *The Hunger* to suggest the resonances her character might have.

The presentations may have also made students 'accountable' for their ideas rather than 'individually' responsible for them, as they were forced to be in discussing their opinions of films. Their selves were still deeply implicated in them, as when *Visions of Destiny* was described as aimed at a 'mature, intelligent audience', yet, whilst Pearl and Gary were the students who most energetically pursued identities as 'mature and intelligent' consumers themselves, this had been hitherto difficult to challenge. Here, however, their

statement was met not with unquestioning acceptance, but a ripple of laughter that spread slowly around the room. The degree of projection involved became more obvious when articulated in this way, without having to be 'owned, and was thus made potentially available for reflection. In the next chapters, I will explore this notion of the audience as a means for students to 'hear' what they say and know from another perspective, as a tool for pedagogy.

Finally, here is Saman, who was always something of a rogue voice amidst the declarations of distance and immunity from horror. She outlines her group's idea as follows:

Saman: our film is called *The Bitch*, the film is about umm, it's set in a high school, a college, uni, stroke, whatever you want, and it's based around a group of friends and within the group of friends, they're really good with each other, they go out, have a good time, just a happy-go-lucky bunch of friends, and then, the audience has found that some of the girls are really bitching within the group, and they'd be bitching about one of the girls in the group, and umm, a lot of bitching going on behind her back, lots of bitching, and the guys know about it, lots of bitching, lots of turmoil, lots of mess, and a lot of anger and tension and friction / but the girl they're bitching about who is actually the bitch, she's - psychopathic? (rising intonation, others say yes) - she's crazy, she's had a disturbed childhood which her friends don't know about, which is
Tajinder: She was adopted so we don't actually know -
Saman: (....) they go away on holiday, a beach holiday, and erm, it is revealed, she finds out, she has it practically confirmed that some of her closest friends are bitching about her, she overhears, (....) and one of the other girls decides to play an April Fool's joke on one of the girls, using another girl, (giggles) (...) the practical joke is that they're going to pretend to kill her, there's loads, cause eventually all the girl's friends are going to be attacked, by the Bitch, (laughter)
Teacher: So they're all going to get the chop in different ways are they?
Saman: This film has a lot of blood, a lot of gore, a lot of grease, a lot of pus (- everyone laughs in response to the word 'grease') there's a lot of that, and umm, sex - oh my god –
(Brenda, the head of department, comes through the room at this point and hears Saman saying 'sex' - Geoff says encouragingly to Saman 'a lot of sex' - more laughter. Brenda says to him 'three-letter words', he responds 'I'm working up to the four')
Saman: and umm, they're all from mixed cultures, all girls, they're all mixed culturally, they're all cultures
Teacher: So where are we setting this? America?
Saman: Yeah, America, cause this way you can have more of the colourful kind of, you know (gestures as if driving a car) wild people, and umm ( ),
Teacher: OK, now is there a Last Girl in this?

Saman: yeah but it's her best friend, the best friend who has done MOST of the bitching about the bitch and she's the (laughter)
Teacher: Some best friend!
Saman: (....) eventually everyone else is missing, and then the girl, the best friend, she's like thinking OK where is everyone going and she actually umm walks in and she finds one of the bodies in the girl's room and she's actually slicing the person whilst the person's dead, on the bed, she's actually slicing and talking to herself (she mimes a long slow stroke through flesh) and she's saying (more talking about the gesture), it can't be tears, it's got to be SLOWLY (imitating it again with glee), and the good thing is, 'my mother always told me to look inside of people'
Teacher: Oh very good, I like that line

Here a 'popular' discourse is articulated within rather than on the margins of classroom practice. It aims at something other than status distinction – hedonism, escapism and pleasure in the colourful, wild, multicultural landscape of a fantasy 'America' (32-4). Its 'value' in one sense lies in its ability to transgress sovereign cultural hierarchies in this specific context - as Saman is only too aware, when the Head of Department overhears (25-8). It refuses the orderly discourse of good taste, listing bodily excretions (blood, gore, grease, pus, 22-3) that cannot be normally spoken in the classroom (unlike the 'tears' to which Amy could admit in relation to *Seven*), and allows Saman to position herself as emotional, sexual and affective. Yet it does more than flaunt taboos. It invites evaluation also for its success in making the metaphorical (maternal) injunction to 'look inside of people' literal and grotesque (46). Horror often works through such puns, as Barker notes in analysing a similar device (Barker 1984, chapter 10). As he also observes, however, they rely for their effect on the audience's recognition of the 'dreadful rewriting' of such clichés, and hardly invite identification with any protagonist. However, a teacher more committed to ideological analysis (myself in an earlier incarnation, for instance) might well have chosen to challenge the 'values' of the film for seeming to portray female friendship as irredeemably vicious. Geoff's liberalism in not doing so (commenting later only that he thought the title was already that of a Jackie Collins novel) served students well here. At least two frames of reference, intertextual and contextual, are necessary to begin to approach an understanding of what the term 'bitch' or the film as a whole might signify to Saman. Firstly, while the students were working, she sang the refrain of a current chart hit, 'Bitch', by Meredith Brooks: 'I'm a bitch, I'm a lover, I'm a child,

I'm a mother, I'm a sinner, I'm a saint...'. The song addresses a lover and warns him that whilst she may leave him confused, because she's 'a little bit of everything all rolled into one', neither he nor she would 'want it any other way'. The term in context reclaims sexist discourse, arguing for complexity and against positioning women as only one or other of a binary. (Saman nominated Alicia Silverstone for the leading role; she plays exactly this type of character in *Clueless* (1995), which was one of Saman's favourite films). Secondly, in her interview, Saman talked about regularly holding 'slumber parties' with groups of female friends at her house. Although it was clearly a domestic practice, she consistently referred to it as a 'girls' night *out*' rather than in:

> I think horror films are good when you wanna have a girls' night out, or you want to get your brother out the room, you know (....) you can just sit there, let your hair down and just scream your lungs out (....) friends stay round, we stay up the whole night (....) pack the whole living room out, and we've got, I've got a widescreen TV, and we just sit there and we just watch a horror film and we draw the curtains, popcorn, chocolate, pizza bites, everything, we just pig out, and just watch a good film (....) turn the lights off, shut the doors, and then everyone's sitting close together, and, you know, just put the volume really loud, so it's, just have a good time, that's what a girls' night out is, and it's always a horror film, it has to be

The context of viewing described here is very different from the content of the film. It self-consciously creates female togetherness rather than competition, in a participatory space designed to offer a release from the surveillant gaze of (br)others, from particular forms of feminine identity, demands to be one particular type of 'girl'.

If this seems merely a description of a 'fun' thing to do at the end of term, let me spell out the implications of my argument. What produced diversity, experiential intensity and participation in this case was an approach that oriented students, not towards the school (and the serious authority of the intellectual), but towards the market and consumer culture. It is not challenging or new to suggest that teachers do more practical work with students in order to encourage them to express themselves and to be more creative. Nor is it to argue that teachers should reluctantly accommodate contemporary culture by 'allowing' the products of the commercial mainstream into the classroom. But given the long history of the school and of teacher identity, in which both are constructed as the last line

of defence against the encroachments of shallow consumerism, it may indeed be controversial to propose that teachers actively embrace the market as a positive and productive pedagogic strategy. I will return to this argument in subsequent chapters.

Conclusion

It would certainly seem that Bazalgette is right to argue that value judgements need to take a more central place in media education than they may have done hitherto. They already count heavily both in teachers' conceptions of the work they do, and in students' response to it. However, simply inviting students to take a position on their tastes is unlikely to move them forward into 'critical reflection', or 'social self-understanding' since the stakes invested in doing so are so high. Nor will we progress the debate beyond the terms we want to hear if we just incite students to speak their truths; students do not yield unmediated accounts of their experience for us to work on. Bennett is therefore right to warn against assuming that the 'spaces of public education are available in a manner that allows them to be simply used as convenient sites of the political projects which individual intellectuals choose or subscribe to' – such as, perhaps, debates about value, public service broadcasting, or indeed, violence (Bennett 1993: 225). We need to be reflexive firstly about the ways in which the school shapes them in accordance with its own histories and technologies, and secondly about students' knowledge of the valorised identities and supervisory discourses that circulate there. Given the 'vestigial authority' of traditional evaluative criteria, technology in itself will offer no solution to the questions Bazalgette raises. Nor will an 'objectivism' in which we demand that students subtract themselves from the study of value judgements. To this extent, Guillory may be right to argue that such approaches are more suited to postgraduate research than to the school. To teach about 'evaluative economies' assumes that students are not already aware of their existence and function; the evidence here suggests that they (of course) are. However, many critics tend to write about 'the school' as if it is a site for the production of singular identities, or indeed about 'value' as if it is a single entity. I have shown that both are more diverse, that we can develop specific strategies and practices (such as practical

work) that allow the construction of various taste communities, provided we do not rush to judge what we find when we do so. However, if we do wish to make a material difference to social relations, a crucial issue is how we may then provide access to credentials, for instance in allowing students' knowledge derived from their cultural preferences to count towards their assessment. In the next chapters, I explore a practice that aims to do so.

Chapter Five - Transitional Pedagogies

The next chapters draw on material from case studies in Kate's school, but contrast the two phases of the research more flexibly. This is partly because Kate's starting point was already closer to an 'audience-centred' pedagogy than Geoff's and so the changes we made represent nuances rather than major distinctions. It is also because I then felt that offering more or different 'theory' would meet goals I thought of as important. Subsequently I came to believe that my approach underestimated the value and complexity of Kate's practice and young people's existing strategies for learning from the media culture that surrounds them and for negotiating the power dynamics of the classroom. These chapters attempt to explain these and to do justice to them.

Teacher aims

As before, I will begin by analysing an interview extract from early in the research, in which I asked Kate about her aims:

Kate: Initially, I think the most important thing is a sort of genre study really, and getting them to analyse texts, so we'll probably be looking at things like different point of view shots, what effect editing has on the storyline or on the viewer - so textual analysis is probably the main part of it. But I also want to think about audiences really, and do people watch horrors in different ways, that kind of thing. I don't want to get too involved in that really. Obviously, they're going to need to know - thinking in terms of their practical work - they're going to have to talk about who's watching their films and what kind of different readings might people make of their own stuff, so obviously we'll have to tackle that. So sort of audience, textual analysis, stuff that's going to be useful for their practical, cause they're going to be - we'll need to look at how films get marketed, publicity, that sort of thing, as they're going to have to design a video cover, with stills. And they're going to have to do the opening sequence of a film of their own, which is why I'm doing stuff on narrative and trying to get them, give them the tools to do textual analysis now. So I think genre really is the main point, the main thing, and pleasures of horror, audience pleasures, the way people might read it. After they've finished their practical work, we're going to look probably at the violence debate - and we'll probably use their practical work as teaching material as well (....)

What I have found quite interesting is that in most classes there are at least one or two kids who are real fans, and they tend to correct whatever you say. Actually last year I had one lad who came, and insisted on bringing me hordes and hordes of films, and he edited a load of stuff together for me, which was really lovely of him. But what he edited together was just a load of really horrific scenes (laughter) that we couldn't - well we watched one of them and I ended up

turning it - I can't remember what the film was - but we had to turn it off in the end, it just got too much.
(...)
It's just really an enjoyable thing really, cause they enjoy it, and there's a lot you can get out of it in terms of looking at genre at this particular part of the course. I had thought this year, as I've always looked at theories of spectatorship and Laura Mulvey, later on in the course - we've considered Madonna and then gone on to look at feminist film - I've considered looking at women this term, in terms of horror, because I don't think there's going to be space for it the rest of the year. But it might be a bit much for them really, it might be a bit of overload to bung a load of theory in. But I think we'll touch on sort of the way women might look at a text, and the male gaze, and I might sort of introduce a little bit about that. But the main thing is genre, giving them enough for their practical.

In the last chapter, I argued that Geoff incorporated a Media Studies perspective within a literary tradition that stressed personal 'enrichment' through 'appreciation' of 'influential' and valuable texts. Whilst Kate too argues that horror is a fruitful and enjoyable area of study (29-30), her allegiances lie more specifically within Media Studies, which was her own academic background, and she draws on both the dominant and emergent paradigms of media education. As I have suggested, there are tensions between them, and in this section I explore how they make themselves felt.

Kate does not mention the concept of ideology that was so central to Masterman's early work; in line with more recent models she has organised the course around concepts of genre, narrative and audience. His influence is apparent in her emphasis on textual analysis (synonymous with 'theory' or conceptual discourse), in the sense of what it is to achieve, and in the technicist and conduit metaphors she uses to describe it. Thus she discusses what texts do - how films offer positions from which they make sense ('point of view shots' or 'editing' and their 'effects on the storyline or viewer', 2-3), how we are implicated in them - spectatorship (31), 'the gaze' (37). Kate's language echoes Bronwyn Davies's description of a feminist and 'post-structuralist methodology', which provides the 'conceptual tools to make the text visible as something constructed from a particular vantage point and with constitutive force and with political implications' (1993: 174). Kate too conceives 'theory' as a tool (14) and an object: it is something that must be 'given' (14, 38) by the teacher to students, 'bunged in' to a course (36). (Geoff also described the handout from Tudor as something for students to 'bang their heads against'). Media texts are therefore

also objects that can be rendered transparent and knowable through revelation of the hidden mechanisms or codes that shape their construction. As Lakoff and Johnson have demonstrated so persuasively (1980), metaphors structure not only what we think, but also how we act and here, they have consequences for how Kate carried out her work. She began with a fortnight's general 'induction' into a number of technical-theoretical terms that students were subsequently encouraged to use in their commentaries, such as narrative (plot and story, equilibrium), diegesis, *mise en scene*, editing (including the '180° rule'), genre. Over three weeks she then showed and analysed extracts from horror films and some posters, screened two complete films (*Night of the Living Dead* (1968) and *Silence of the Lambs* (1991)) and set 'audience research' work. After this she set the practical work task, and five weeks were given over to its completion. Structuring the course in this way suggested a theory of agency; to function effectively, students first needed the means (tools) to master and control textual elements, which they would then re-assemble as producers. Kate's comments also hypothesise that analysis will enable students to understand themselves (as gendered, through positions of power and identification - 'the way women might look at a text, and the male gaze', 36-7) and society (women's subordinate position might be explained through connections between representations and wider power relations). Far from being 'post-structuralist', however, I have suggested that this 'analyse and you shall know' model is based on what Turkle has called a 'modernist interpretation of understanding' (1997: 33-4).

Conceptual discourse may have had other meanings for Kate's sense of herself as a teacher. She often worried that students saw Media Studies as a 'soft option'. Scaffolding the students' 'spontaneous' terms with more specialised ones – 'protagonist' for 'hero' for example – may have aimed to convince them (and herself) that they were indeed accumulating knowledge in ways they expected. She did however express doubts about whether this extended their understanding in complex new ways, or simply gave them a new vocabulary to show off to others (ignorant parents and siblings at home). It may also have served as a bid to increase the prestige of her work within the school hierarchy. Senior Management, as she remarked, appeared to think that anyone who watched television could therefore teach about it. They consistently refused her requests for a fully trained colleague, at times 'offloading' teachers from various

departments with spare hours in their timetable, regardless of their interest in or commitment to the subject. (Fraser's research has shown that this is not unusual, 1995). This not only added to her workload, as she had to supervise them as well as teach herself, but also diminished her own status. Her tactics of resistance wisely targeted the school budget; she sent her colleagues on costly training courses each year, in order to demonstrate the professional necessities of the discipline.

Despite this utility, theory appeared to be somewhat tyrannical. In the interview Kate indicates an implicit concern about whether what she gives is ever 'enough' (38) and at other times spoke of needing to have 'more of an understanding', do 'more background reading', and feeling that she was 'crap at giving theory'. If theory is what students 'need to know' (7), and if it comes from the teacher, then students' successful learning depends entirely on the teacher and the quality of the 'tools' she provides. This is an onerous responsibility given that, as I argued in Chapter Three, Kate's daily routine in school constantly involved her in more immediate and pressing tasks (classroom discipline, talking to parents, supervising the loan of equipment, and so on) than digesting and pedagogising academic books. Her subordination of theory to the expedient goal of practical work (representing her input as limited to what is necessary for students to be able to complete it and to play the examiners' game in commentary-writing (8, 11-2)), may represent a compromise by which she allays her fears. It simultaneously acts as a warning to me. In the interview Kate addresses me as a researcher and fellow teacher who shares her knowledge of 'high' theory around spectatorship (Mulvey, the male gaze, 32, 37). But she also informs me about the contexts in which she works, contrasting her own in-depth familiarity with everyday realities and her (less 'academic') students who might find theory an 'overload' (35), with my possibly unrealistic expectations of what she or they might achieve. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, metaphors hide as well as reveal, and here, the notion of theory as a universal and neutral tool obscures the question of contextualisation – where something is said, by whom, how, who listens. It does not allow Kate to value what else she offered her students, and deprived me also of a means to explain what I admired about her work, which was not her 'competence', or grasp of abstract principles, but her performance – her 'way of being' in the classroom. Or, to put it in terms Probyn uses, it was the

ontological (who Kate was), not just the epistemological (what she knew) that moved and seduced me (and some of her students too).

Kate's explicit references to 'what audiences do', whilst they may indicate a commitment to more audience-centred perspectives, do not necessarily place her firmly within them. Teaching about marketing and publicity (11) suggests that the concept of audience may explain the industry so that students can position themselves within it, rather than demystifying it. But as I have argued, 'audience positioning' through perspective and editing (3) can be taken up in a way consonant with a pessimistic, Frankfurt-school analysis of media institutions, in which the media have the power successfully to constitute subjectivity rather than audiences to create it. 'Pleasures' (16) can be seen as either highly 'problematic' (Masterman), or as the source of a new agenda, moving away from 'meanings and messages' (Mercer, Buckingham). The notion of heterogeneous 'decodings' ('do audiences read differently', 5, 8-9, 16, 36) seems to reassert audience autonomy, yet it too can be determinist, stressing the role of pre-existing social identities (such as gender) in shaping interpretation or indeed constructing them in the process of researching them.

It is the stress placed on practical work that brings Kate closer to emergent paradigms. The production task she set was open-ended rather than the tightly structured request for 'code-breaking' that Masterman advocated in his early work. It asked students to write a scenario for a new horror film, on the basis of which they then produced a video cover and an opening sequence of still images taken with a digital camera and dubbed onto videotape with a soundtrack. Such practices provide a means by which young people can demonstrate the competence they have already derived from their consumption of media texts. Moreover, the UCLES syllabus for which Kate had opted had a pragmatic concern with access to educational qualifications, accrediting this informal learning through three (now two) such practical modules. Kate saw them as a means by which her working class students, who lacked the 'cultural capital' of more privileged young people, could succeed. She spoke of marking them generously, on the grounds that they would be unlikely to achieve such high grades in parts of the course that required greater traditional written literacy skills. (It is worth noting, however, that the external examiner for the module in

the first case study in fact upgraded several pieces of work). Kate was aware that in a different economic climate, many students would have left school after GCSE level, and were now 'just filling in two years'; it was the productions that motivated them, not 'theory'. The modular syllabus helped to give students a sense of achievement throughout the course, as they completed each assessed unit, rather than only at the end. It was also the first Media Studies course to permit students who left school at the end of the first year to do so with an AS Level certificate rather than nothing at all.

In materials prepared for OFSTED inspection, Kate wrote 'The department feels that Media theory and practice cannot be taught separately and therefore has attempted to encourage learning through practice and evaluation within its schemes of work'. She echoes Buckingham et al's argument in suggesting that some conceptual learning is only developed *through* particular practices such as 'the experience of production itself' (Buckingham, Grahame, and Sefton-Green 1995: 12, their emphasis). There is therefore a slight contradiction between these principles and the actual course just described, the structure of which suggests that the production was a form of applied analysis. In using students' work as teaching material for the violence debate (17-8), she also adopts a recommendation by Buckingham (e.g. 1986: 91) that students should analyse their own representations using approaches developed in relation to professional texts. However, her phrasing, 'attempted to', and her tale in the interview of the student whose 'really horrific' videos were 'just too much' (24, 27) indicate an anxiety about such strategies. The student who brings in 'hordes and hordes' of videos to share and gives up his free time to edit a compilation tape, seems to be delighted that – at last – his informal interest has been recognised by the school. She acknowledges this when she terms it 'lovely' (24), or welcomes as 'interesting' the reversal of hierarchies in which students are able to correct and educate her (20-1). Yet it raises questions about whether analytic discourses are adequate to capture the 'meaning' of such texts and how far they can encourage students to engage in distanced, 'critical' discourse about their attachments, when they seem so partial, excessive and even barbarous.

Kate's dilemmas also, I would argue, arise from being a middle class woman teacher in a mainly white, working class area. She had chosen to work there on

the grounds that she might 'make more of a difference' than in the selective school where she had worked previously. Her department was the most popular in the sixth form, and she consistently achieved good results, with high 'added value', to use current terminology. She saw her students as located socially at the 'bottom of the heap' and was intensely loyal to them, deciding, for instance, not to apply for a job at a nearby, more privileged school in case they felt 'let down'. Her involvement with them meant that they often worked their way into her dreams. Yet what she wished *for* students – a sense of specialness and recognition – was in many ways what she wished *from* them too; to be loved as a reward for the love she showed them. (In Chapter One, I argued that this 'dream of love' is structured into the pedagogic relation). She did receive this on occasions – on her thirtieth birthday, her form group threw a party for her and showered her with presents. Students' interest in her – as well as their speculations about my relation to her, described in Chapter Three - revealed a certain erotic charge surrounding her, in the broad sense identified by Epstein and Johnson (1998: 126). When in evaluation interviews I asked students what they thought her opinion of horror films was, I was struck by how many remembered that she had once mentioned watching *Night of the Living Dead* on a Saturday morning. Whilst they interpreted this differently, they seemed to have been excited by this brief glimpse into her private life. However, inevitably, Kate frequently felt drained, taken for granted or treated with the tired contempt accorded 'mother figures'. Her desire to give was balanced against a reluctance to fall into an asexual, benign and nurturing role, and she negotiated the distinction in a variety of ways. She was capable of being magnificently fierce when angered, although if she felt subsequently to have been in the wrong, she would make a point of apologising to students afterwards, in public and at length, indicating that her desire for mutual respect precluded neither occasional lapses nor admission of failure. She demonstrated fearlessness in dealing with them, for instance, once curtailing a brewing fight between David and Kevin – both over six feet tall - by placing herself physically between them. She also performed verbal acts of sexual transgression. During a discussion of *Silence of the Lambs*, for example, she caused an almost tangible sense of shock in the classroom by repeating (twice, in a matter of fact way) the line, 'I can smell your cunt'. I explore the function of such strategies in more detail below.

The notion of 'making a difference' also raised many questions about what she might make a difference to and why. Personally, she was conscious of herself as an outsider, who commuted each day from central London and contrasted with them in class and gender specific ways. Where her A-Level co-teacher was notorious for her plunging necklines and mini skirts, she cut her hair short, often wore trousers and dressed more stylishly than is usual for teachers (according to Epstein and Johnson). She sometimes rationalised her otherness within the discourse of 'role model', once arguing that by eating apples during lessons, she demonstrated healthy food habits for young women students who too often starved themselves. However, she seemed simultaneously uncomfortable with this notion, implying as it does both a criticism of others and an elevation of self, as if she stood for something 'better'. What is needed, I will suggest, is a discourse that can encompass the erotics of working 'across, through and with difference' (Todd 1997: 238), and the opportunities it offers for both teachers and students to think about themselves.

Similarly, as a teacher, she wanted the A-Level to differ from traditional subjects by recognising students' knowledge and interests, and hence chose to teach other popular culture topics such as sport, soap opera and pop music. Yet she also desired to introduce unfamiliar experiences and ideas. In the interview, she refers to 'Madonna and feminist film' (32-3); she also taught documentary and African cinema. Her interest was not so much (as for Geoff) in moral or aesthetic uplift through encounter with a canon, but newly politicised identities and perceptions; she recounted proudly how one student had increased his awareness of commercial exploitation in independent research on BSkyB's growing monopoly of football. However, in general, hers was not the voice of a confident vanguard that aimed to liberate by raising class-consciousness. As she commented, the fact that her students saw themselves as middle class presented an immediate problem for such a task, desirable though it might be. She told me several times that her students were not 'cool' compared to inner-city youth (beloved by Cultural Studies researchers), who, whilst suffering economic hardship, participate in vibrant and often ethnically diverse subcultures that can more easily be reclaimed as progressive. Her students' tastes revolved around the commercial mainstream or disreputable forms such as horror and heavy metal, and their (suburban) culture was less materially deprived. The

question then became whether, by affirming it, she would also be endorsing potentially 'unacceptable' elements within it (racism, sexism, homophobia) to which she was in principle opposed. Was it, she wondered, hypocritical to be so committed to students with whom she would not, nonetheless, regularly choose to go to the pub on a Friday night? She struggled over how and what teachers are to value when they 'value' students' culture – when they want to celebrate but also move them on - that were intensified by the context in which she taught.

When I asked other teachers in the staffroom to 'tell me about students' culture', one told me emphatically that 'they have none. This school is their only cultural link to the rest of the world. Give me Hackney any day'. Her explicit class loathing and dislike (rendered marginally more explicable by the fact that she was herself a local girl 'made good') was unusual. However, another responded with an illustrative anecdote about a student who, on a school trip to France, asked whether Rouen would be 'more like Romford or Ilford'. We cannot understand why the question is laughable unless we also acknowledge the ambivalent resonance of 'Essex' in British society. It stands for the earning working classes, whose tastes are habitually derided in the broadsheet press; for an oppressive gender culture polarised between short-haired army 'lads' getting 'off their faces' at the weekends and the Essex girl, whose blond hair, 'white' shoes and handbag also symbolise ethnic homogeneity. (Geoff's school only a few miles away, with its 70% ethnic minority student body, does not even inhabit this imaginary landscape). Yet as both the last two elections have proved, the 'Essex vote' is desired and courted. The staffroom mythology reads the student's question as an indication of her parochialism and her inability to go beyond what she knows. It proves how much she needs the education that can open her eyes to the radically new and superior – the sophistication and cosmopolitanism of France. Yet we might also argue that her local knowledge leads to the perception of subtle differences invisible to outsiders and provides a means by which the – frighteningly? - unknown is managed by comparing it to what is already familiar. In the contrasts here, I would argue, we have the same debate as that I posed at the start of Chapter Three: between popular culture (media or Essex) as an antagonist, to be fought and excluded, or as an accomplice to be welcomed.

Perverse Pedagogies

I want to pursue the learning strategy embodied in the question of 'Romford vs. Ilford' by analysing a classroom discussion of an extract from *Nightmare on Elm Street*, in which the 'final girl' Nancy falls asleep in the bath and Freddy Kruger's knife-fingers emerge from the water:

Teacher: The bath scene, then? Why do we have the scissors, the razor blades coming up between her legs?
Kevin: Cause it's dirty, cause Freddy's dirty
Teacher: **Freddy's** dirty -?
Kevin: Freddy's a dirty old man, yeah
Teacher: When she's sitting there in the bathtub, she's **filmed** in the bath with her legs open, anyway, / I don't know -
Kevin: Most probably, it's probably just like, it depends, what come up through the bath, miss, it's probably just like to spice it up a bit and make it ( )
Teacher: But you can't deny, it did look very phallic ( ). When I talk about phallic, when I say it looks a bit phallic, do you know what I mean? (Silence). If something's phallic, you might, it's, it's meant to, sort of symbolise the penis
Steve: Oh yeah, Miss Hobbs kept going on about that! (others agree, laughing)
Kevin: Saucy!
Steve: She kept going on about it in Clint Eastwood's films
Teacher: // So a phallus is basically, it means penis, but, so, a phallic symbol is something that represents a penis ( ) - no, not genitals
?: Oh right
Neil: Yeah I know but what's that got to do with that girl? She hasn't got a penis!
Teacher: She hasn't, no, **but**, /
Kevin: Is that like (?? the dictionary meaning)?
Teacher: Yes. // So if something is phallic (*Writes on board - phallus – phallic)* people often say that **guns** in cowboy films are kind of phallic symbols because they represent umm / men's penises, cowboys' penises, so the bigger the gun, in theory ( ) - and other people might say that cameras lenses might be seen as a bit phallic. So something that is phallic represents or symbolises the penis. So can anyone think of any other examples? (Boys laugh)
David: Russell's head! // (more laughter) ( )
Teacher: Often phallic symbols are supposed to represent, not just male sexuality but male **power** as well, umm, the bigger the camera lens, the bigger the gun, the more **power** you have (...)
Kevin: Is that like medallions?
Teacher: In some ways, I mean, yeah it can be extended to thinking about macho symbols, // umm, // masculinity, yeah
Neil: My pen! (holding it up)
Teacher: // Yeah, so when you said it looked a bit rude, you were kind of suggesting something like all those razor blades might hurt, so these, Kevin, I mean, you were almost making the assumption there, that they were kind of **phallic**, / weren't you?
Kevin (in a mock-meek tone): Yes, / I was miss
?: I don't agree with this

Teacher: I don't know, maybe I'm not, maybe it's just **me**, just, reading things into it, but when you look at the actual **frame**, you had the girl with her legs open – sshh - // the girl with her legs open and this kind of hand in between, // ( ) it's almost as if she's almost going to be raped by him, by Freddy's hand, is Freddy going to ( ), you don't know. // Umm. // So that's, that's a new word
Kevin: I'd just like to say -
Neil: ( ) and then when she, he just sort of pulled her under, sort of thing, he doesn't rape her or / , but they wouldn't, like, show something like that, I think they probably put that in just for a bit of fun
Teacher: A bit of fun?
Neil: I bet this bloke, the director just said, oh we'll do that, it'll make people laugh
Teacher: Did it make you **laugh**, that bit?
Kevin: That's what I said miss, I said, they wouldn't have ( ) on the bath, they thought, oh, just to make it a bit more / funny, it's quite funny,
?: Yeah, more like *Jaws* –
Kevin: - put it up between her legs, just to make it a bit more outrageous
Teacher: So it's just about outrage? ( )
David: Cause if they'd had the camera on her shoulder, you wouldn't have been able to see ( )
Teacher: It wouldn't have been as exciting - or / titillating, titillating in the sense that –
David: You wanted to see it, like see him, to see that he was there, but ( )
Kevin: Exactly (several voices talking at once)
Teacher: Would you have wanted to see him do something, kind of sexually violent towards her? ( )
Kevin: It's too -
David: - rude (laughter)
Teacher: But did you like, you kind of liked, you almost liked the antic- , the pleasure in it, the possibility that maybe he's going to - ( ) (boys laugh awkwardly). Am I being - Is that true or not?
Kevin: Yeah - Steve thought so (pats his back)
Teacher: You thought they put it in for fun // (boys laughing). Louisa what did you make of that / that bit, with the razor blades coming out of the bath?
Louisa: It was horrible (laughs) //
Teacher: Did you think it was, did you kind of, fear, feel frightened at that stage or not?
Louisa: // It was just //
Kelly: sick
Louisa: Sick, (laughs) yeah //
Teacher: Do those sort of scenes make you feel angry? // (Kelly laughs)
Louisa: No
Teacher: Not really // ( ) Sorry? ( ) You said it was a bit disgusting
Steve: It was the same in, er, *Dracula*, the last one, / did you watch the same bit as us?[1] Yeah, did you see that bit where, with the women in the bed?
Teacher: No, we didn't watch that bit (boys chorus together 'oh!' gearing up to describe it, teacher hushes them)
Steve: one of the women vampires like goes towards his /
Kevin: Miss why didn't we watch that bit miss?
Steve: and she goes to bite his - / goes to bite his - /

[1] Steve and others were taught separately by Miss Hobbs two lessons a week. See Appendix II.

92 ? (male): not his neck! (laughter)
93 Neil: What film?
94 ? (male): *Bram Stoker's Dracula*
95 Teacher: So one of the vampires goes towards his - // phallus
96 ? (male): ( ) Sharp teeth
97 Teacher: So what you'd imagine then is something quite painful
98 Russell: And then it changes to pleasure
99 Teacher: So do you see his face?
100 ? (male): Well you see her go towards him but –
101 ? (male): and then it changes like, he's enjoying it and then -
102 Steve: And then you see Count Dracula come in and tell them to stop
103 Teacher: So do you think that in a lot of horror films, sex is // implicated, a lot of
104 them, perhaps the monsters are perhaps umm sexually motivated or frustrated
105 even
106 Neil: They're all 18 aren't they, so ( )?
107 Teacher: // Would you enjoy it if they didn't – I mean, / Russell, you said that if
108 the hand blades were on her shoulder, or David you said it, if it was on her
109 shoulder, you wouldn't get quite as scared
110 ?: No but that makes it better
111 Kevin: It just makes it more interesting /
112 Kelly?: it gets you more (?worried)
113 Kevin: ( ) nice and gradual
114 Teacher: So you can fantasise (slightly scandalised laughter)
115 Kevin: Well no ( ) (more laughter)
116 Teacher: Let's move on then
117 Kevin: Let's do that miss

Kate's epistemological strategies here are, I would argue, precisely those of the demystificatory dominant paradigms of media education considered in Chapter One. Her opening move is to ask 'why' an image is constructed in a certain way (1). Her question assumes a singular intention on the part of media producers and that there are meanings already in the text (nothing is innocent, especially Freddy's knife-blade hands). However, they are encoded in a deceptive and disguised way that operates behind the backs of audiences. To be understood, they must be translated into other terms supplied by the teacher or critic - whether the reductively literal (*Beyond Blame*, *Critical Viewing*) or the expansively metaphorical (as Masterman reads through texts to the capitalist system). Kate encompasses both. She initially describes a phallic symbol as 'representing a penis' (12, 16-7, 24, 26), making it more concrete; it may look like scissors, but actually, it's a cock; you may think it's a laugh, but in fact, it's a rape (37-9, 45, 54). But it can also stand for something more abstract – the gun for male power (29-31).

Where Geoff more 'openly' invited students to construct themselves as self-monitoring moral agents, Kate's questions position her as a persuader and command assent. She comments on what students say as if to reveal what lies just beyond their comprehension or to incite confession of what they are unwilling to admit: 'you can't deny' (10), 'you were making the assumption... weren't you?' (38), 'you almost liked' (70), 'is that true, or not?' (72). To be a 'good student' in these exchanges involves taking on the teacher's terms, reflecting them back to demonstrate that students too have achieved self-knowledge and reached the same destination.

Kate does not address the issue of gender difference directly; as I will argue below, to do so is fraught with risks. Instead, it is carried in the phrasing of questions to male and female students, which draw on an audience-oriented perspective that allows for multiple readings, but only in reaction to what is already there. Asking the former whether they find the scene 'titillating' (62), whether they want to see Freddy 'do something kind of sexually violent' towards Nancy (66-7) or to 'fantasise' (114) constructs male viewers as voyeurs taking vicarious pleasure in women's suffering, seeking an outlet for their frustration (104) through identification with a killer or monster. (In exactly the terms, that is, assumed by psychologists such as Tamborini and Stiff, or conventional feminists such as Cherland, discussed in Chapter Two). Women audiences, however, are considered capable of taking one or both of two positions. They are thus asked whether they identify with Nancy and 'feel frightened' (77), or if they reject the values of the film, read it 'oppositionally' and get 'angry' as feminists do (82).

In Chapter One, I remarked that advocates of 'critical viewing' rarely illustrate their specific practices. From the data here, I would suggest that what results from their perspectives is a thoroughly *perverse* pedagogy[2]. It is not, however, perverse because it attempts to address questions of fantasy, desire, and sexuality. All these circulate already in the classroom, in what students and teacher alike bring to it, in the texts they discuss, the jokes and allusions they make. Nor is it perverse because talking about penises with a group of mainly male adolescent students may afford a certain pleasure to a young woman teacher (not just Kate, but also 'Miss Hobbs', it would seem (13, 15)). It is

perverse because *it knows already who students are* and has mapped out in advance the positions they can take up. Its desire is narcissistic, since it seeks only the return of the same (a 'yes miss'). For all the claims to promote 'dialogue', it cannot be interactive and it is thus 'ir-response-able' or unaccountable. It is not interested in what students may have to say, firstly because meaning has already been decided elsewhere, by experts or by the teacher, and secondly because audience pleasures (Masterman) or 'addictions' (*Beyond Blame*) have been produced 'for' them by the powerful media. Students only become responsible after the educational experience - for deciding whether to 'oppose' dominant meanings, or join in an anti-violence campaign. Similarly, here, no one takes responsibility for the desires held to circulate within the text. Kevin accepts that the image is sexual, but the motivation is Freddy's – he is 'dirty' (3, 5). Others attribute it to the director or a behind-scenes 'they' (50, 52, 55, 60), although they simultaneously exculpate them from devious motives; it is 'just for a bit of fun' (50), to 'spice it up' (9), 'make people laugh' (53), 'make it more outrageous' (58), or create suspense (60-1). They adopt the role of innocent, passive spectator, being outraged, made to laugh or worry, rather than actively participating in making meaning. When Kate asks them directly about their pleasures, Kevin displaces them on to others ('Steve thought so', 73). For her part, Kate refers to the anonymous structures of the text – how the scene is filmed (6), 'the actual frame' (43) – and eventually takes refuge in a teacherly identity, in which she offers novel information ('that's a new word', 46), disavowing any personally invested interpretation or flirtatious intent.

The students, however, do not 'answer from the place to which they are called' and thus assert discontinuity (Ellsworth 1997: 109). Louisa may initially give a gender-appropriate response to the question of how she felt, by saying it was 'horrible' (76). Yet she refuses the 'angry feminist' position, whilst calling it 'sick' may not be gender-specific, and indeed may be a term of approval. As for Kate's male students, if they are the sadistic subjects the theory tells us, they are not letting on. Most obviously, what they thrill to is not the prospect of rape, but the collective memory of a deliciously endangering fellatio (85-102). Steve's comparison of Nancy and Harker ('it was the same...', 85) suggests that what they share is not gender, but a situation – of nakedness, vulnerability, exposure

[2] The term 'perverse' in this context is borrowed from Ellsworth, although she defines it as pedagogies that address her

and explicit genital threat. Both are available to viewers for a fantasy that is all the more enticing because it is unfinished and unsatisfying (Nancy is only 'pulled under', 48, and Dracula cuts short Harker's pleasuring, 102). Neil, in holding up his pen (35), is self-mocking rather than aggrandising (if what is bigger signifies more power, as Kate has just said, then his potency is rather limited; and it may be relevant that he is dyslexic).

A concept of positioning that naturalises gender by assuming that men identify with powerful male protagonists, and women with powerless victims (Cherland, Davies) would certainly seem badly misplaced on this evidence. Nor do I see here a simple castration anxiety or desire for return to the presymbolic maternal order (Neale, Creed). However, I want to debate learning strategies rather than the accuracy of theory. Throughout this thesis, I have raised the question of whether we can evolve a pedagogy that allows pleasure, interestedness and excess into the classroom, that would be sensitive to context and to difference, that would value teachers' work and students' existing knowledge. To do so, we should listen carefully to Kate's students. They operate, not through logic, revelation, rules, application of a language the teacher supplies, but through an everyday poetics of association, relation, comparison and substitution. They tell her what something 'means' by telling her what it is like, and thus that meaning can never be definitively pinned down, for it depends on its position in relation to something else, and different frames of reference change both texts and reading subjects (Bennett). Comparing *Nightmare on Elm Street* to *Jaws* (46) is subtly different from comparing it to *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, and it may be radically different from comparing it to Hammer Horror (as did Alan in Chapter Three). David's ready wit in offering 'Russell's head' as one example of a 'phallic symbol' (28) refers to what is evident, in front of him and in the public domain, not to what is hidden and needs to be exposed. He does not report on a meaning already existing out there in the world, but brings new ones into being by an 'inappropriate' pun. His strategy is more ludic than serious, embodied and personal rather than abstract, because such associations are by their very nature motivated by individual desires, needs, partialities and feelings. It thus permits the humour that makes the classroom a seductive space to be, but it exceeds rationalisation and is necessarily unpredictable. It works to the extent

as though 'they already know what is good for me' (Ellsworth 1997: 1)

that it identifies relevant attributes that enable comparison and make us look at both Russell's head and phallic symbols in a different light – but you have to *be there* to know what these might be. Hence to you, my reader, it is largely incomprehensible, although perhaps evocative, and even to me as observer it is ambiguous. It may be verbal (Russell is a dickhead?), but perhaps – if we are indeed dealing with a generation 'attuned to spectacle' (Sconce, Chapter Two) - it is more aesthetic and visual (a comment on the fact that Russell is red-haired, that his head is close-cropped, disproportionately small...?). Thus, whilst there are socially assigned meanings to which we can point (guns and cameras for male power), there are others that we cannot know in advance. How *Jaws* differs from *Dracula*, Romford from Ilford, or in what ways Russell's head is like a penis, are questions that require genuine curiosity from teachers, and preparedness to listen.

A pedagogy that built on these learning strategies would be interested, in at least two senses. We have to be interested enough to ask, and the answers we get may tell us in turn what students themselves are interested in, on the terms that are relevant to them rather than those teachers have predetermined. (And it may be 'interesting and important', as Bazalgette might say, to hear that they care more about being done to – sucked and sickened – than doing to others). Consensus may not be achieved, but students are not therefore solitary individuals forever ignorant of the other. David can only gauge the success of his joke from the reaction of his classmates. Their laughter provides a warrant for the comparison, but by showing they 'get' it in this way, they reveal their own implication, their intimate knowledge of the situation. The learning here is accountable in that it is rhetorically structured and two sided (Billig 1987). It thus allows something 'more' into the classroom, or, more accurately, allows us to acknowledge the something more that is already there: human kinship and social relationships. What gets lost if we focus only on the 'theory' that teachers offer students, is what was most obvious to me: that the teaching here worked primarily because Kate and her students cared, quite a lot, about each other.

... and paranoia

However, these exchanges threaten the teacher's power to pronounce on textual interpretation and undermine pedagogies based on single texts. They suggest not only that no overall coherence is possible, but that students do not need teachers to provide them with a systematic framework (or 'cognitive map') through which they can achieve epistemological mastery of an entire terrain (cf. Collins 1995: 34-5)). What they have already to hand (down the road or sitting next to them) serves them well enough when what they need is *something to think with*.

Perhaps partly as a consequence, this is not a utopian, harmonious learning community of shared values. The students resist Kate's assumption of the phallic position of the one who knows, at points overtly (19, 41, 115), at others more subtly. In his words ('Yes, / I was miss', 40), Kevin appears submissively to accept her argument. But through his tone, the timing of his pause, and his (habitual) tag 'miss', underscoring the hierarchy between them, he manages to extract a self-accusing confession from her in her turn ('maybe it's just me', 42). David too responds obligingly to her request for contributions. Yet for Kate to call the phallus a penis is not neutral. It can act as a cruel unveiling, since as Dyer states, 'the penis can never live up to the mystique implied by the phallus' (1992: 274). In turn, the enigmatic opacity of 'Russell's head', which does not reveal but must be interpreted, disturbs Kate's demand for the flaccidity of an answer that will mirror her question. It allows David to claim power for himself, to reassert his 'hardness', challenging her authority to talk about (his) privates in public. The laughter he seeks may aim to deflect potential embarrassment by turning all eyes temporarily onto Russell, but also to ally the group against Kate.

Kevin and David's responses might be read as mimicry, which Homi Bhabha has described as the 'insurgent strategy of the subaltern', that returns 'the look of surveillance' with 'the displacing gaze of the disciplined' (Bhabha 1994: 85-92). Although Bhabha writes about colonial discourse, the fact that he uses psychoanalytic theories suggests that his arguments do not apply only in this context, as Young has argued (1990: 153). Bhabha discusses the native - his example is the Anglicised Indian civil servant - who copies colonial style and is

hence 'recognizably the same as the colonizer but still different: "not quite / not white"' (Young 1990: 147) – as 'Russell's head' is 'almost but not quite' a phallic symbol. Whilst mimicry should be reassuring (since it domesticates and familiarises the other), it is also alienating since it necessarily always returns a difference, only partially representing the coloniser and thus displacing his original identity. It is therefore 'at once resemblance and menace' (Bhabha 1994), and leaves the coloniser profoundly ambivalent, as Kate, I noted, was unsure about 'being a role model', about whether she wanted to see herself reflected back by students.

Bhabha's perspective is useful to explain the psychodynamics of the encounter with otherness in the classroom and thereby to help us develop more self-reflexive pedagogies. Kate, as I will argue in more detail below, in practice opts pleasurably to exploit the erotics of her distinction from students and does not punish them for their dissent. Geoff's address to students as 'Ladies and Gentlemen' may have served to fix them as firmly 'other' – as may also his tendency, shared by other white teachers in that school, to speak of Asian students in ways that exoticised their difference. By contrast, Bronwyn Davies offers a 'critical' pedagogical practice that falls into outright paranoia (and since her documentation of actual practice is so unusual, I do not mean to suggest in my analysis that feminism is peculiarly problematic). She discusses an exchange between her researcher, Chas, and a group of primary school children (and it is significant that they are working class and some are aboriginal). Chas asks them to 'develop the character' of the woman victim in the story they are to write, in a way that 'resists the dominant discourse'. She therefore refuses to let them make her 'sexy, pretty and scared' and demands instead 'something totally different'. Anna suggests 'fat and ugly', and Brian then says 'fuckin' ugly' (Davies 1993: 105). Davies calls his comment 'aggressive' and states that it was 'evocative of an attitude I encountered when counselling an adolescent boy involved in gang rape...' (106). Her interpretation is radically decontextualised (a comment made in a lesson does not mean the same as one in a therapy session), and her logic is shocking: if Brian shares an 'attitude' with a gang rapist, she implies that he is also capable of the same behaviour.

Davies lacks reflexivity about the role of the teacher. Chas is assumed not to oppress or repress by virtue of her liberating intention, thus Brian takes all the blame and the dominating effects of Chas's pedagogy are ignored. Yet Anna's suggestion of 'fat and ugly' in response to Chas's request for something 'completely different' from 'sexy and pretty' is a logical reversal of the terms (and thus probably has little to do with an emancipatory urge), and Brian's then plays on and twists her words. Both comments, that is, are constituted by the terms of Chas's address and so whilst Brian does mobilise sexist discourse, this does not necessarily indicate a commitment to an oppressive world order beyond the classroom. To read a pun – the return of a sound that is 'almost but not quite' fat and ugly – by a ten or eleven-year-old boy as suggesting that he is 'like' a rapist is psychologically crude and paranoid on Davies's part (Brian hates Chas / me / women). This is not to condone Brian's remark; but if we want to avoid such situations we might do better to examine the disciplinary power relations of specific pedagogies than to police the supposed 'attitudes' of individual students.

Chas comes to the classroom with a ready-made analysis that entitles her, she thinks, to determine what is dominant and what is resistant. She wants to hear it again because she – like all teachers, like all subjects - dreams of love, of students returning recognition of her as a good teacher. Hence Davies cites uncritically the claims of some (white, middle class) girls to have been enlightened and 'amazed' by Chas's teaching (150, 159). However, when this discourse is unleashed in this new context, it can be disarticulated, loosened from its secure moorings in academic institutions. Brian exploits the heterogeneity inherent in all positions within language to return a displacement, in which as Judith Butler writes, he 'illuminates the blindness that motivates (her) speech act', exposing her 'as no longer (and not ever) fully in control' (Butler 1997: 12, 13). His comment is perhaps particularly disturbing because it is close, neither completely foreign nor a simple mirroring. Paranoia occurs when the narcissistic demand – that Chas be given what she wants and needs to hear from the students on whom she depends to authorise her existence - is refused and is inevitably then 'reinscribed as implacable aggression, coming assertively from without' (Young 1990: 151). It may not be entirely groundless, since Brian may indeed resent Chas's self-righteous bullying (understandably, in my view). Yet Brian is not in control of his meanings and his remark and the response he

evoked were inadvertent, just as was Chas's. As Young points out, power, on this analysis, is equivocal, never securely possessed (still less ever simply abandoned) by teachers or students, media or audiences. 'Mimicry at once enables power and produces the loss of agency. If control slips away from the colonizer, the requirement of mimicry means that the colonized, while complicit in the process, remains the unwitting and unconscious agent of menace – with a resulting paranoia on the part of the colonizer as he tries to guess the native's sinister intention' (148). The subjugated do not resist consciously, since they menace 'unwittingly'. I thus arrive at the political problem of postmodernism, which has frequently been seen as removing agency altogether, presenting subjects as merely the complicitous effects of the operations of power. In the next chapter I will argue that this fear is misplaced.

Justice, ethics and the erotic

Here, however, I want to develop the consequences of my arguments for how to judge what we do in the classroom. I have taken a position that holds that we cannot assess interpretations as true, good or right in an absolute sense, because meaning depends on its context and position; critical autonomy is also impossible, because learning is reliant on the responses of others. I have advocated instead a turn to specificity and difference. Critic Carmen Luke sees such moves as running 'serious theoretical and political risks' (Luke 1998: 24). She explains these as a 'rampant pluralism' that removes standpoints from which teachers can 'claim the authority of ... norms', distinguish between the 'morally defensible and indefensible', 'censure patently oppressive knowledges', and 'arbitrate' the hierarchy of oppressions between students. My own view is that teachers should indeed give up doing all these things. I draw on perspectives that argue that our practices should be assessed in terms of the justice of the meanings we make (e.g. Ellsworth 1997; Shotter 1993). Ethics also entails that we look at the relations to one's self that particular practices produce - 'what we do to ourselves or ask others to do to themselves' rather than 'what we do and say for others' (Gore 1993: 154). However, I would acknowledge that this does force teachers into some awkward compromises, some of which I point to in this section.

As previously noted, much critical work assumes that particular pedagogic strategies such as classroom interactions using language are neutral. Masterman holds that dialogue can involve a 'genuine sharing of power' and Bronwyn Davies refers repeatedly to the 'discussion' of texts and proclaims it unproblematically as a highly effective learning tool ('These are profoundly important discussions for these children', 164). I have already pointed to critiques that argue that this fails to theorise power relations between participants, or assumes that it is culturally amenable to all students (Ellsworth 1994 (1988)), but I want to animate them through an example. During a lesson on horror audiences, Kate raised the issue of whether it was better to watch a horror film with other fans. Do you think, she asked innocently, that you would be able to 'discuss' it 'in a more detailed way', at a 'different level'? Several students snorted contemptuously at her suggestion. 'You don't **discuss**' said Neil in a tone of disgust, 'you don't go, "let's go see it and **discuss** it"... You talk about them, you just say "oh that was a good bit", but you don't start, you know, like **discussing** them, do you? (...) It's not like *Ricky Lake*'. Kevin joined in, putting on a mannered, effete voice: 'I won't say, "that bit symbolises that for me", "that suggests many things to me"'. Eventually Kate compromised: talking about 'good bits' or 'what you liked' was what you did at the cinema, but 'discussing' films was what you did in lessons.

The students' reactions resemble those of Harmandeep and co., quoted in Chapter Four, who point out that what and how they learnt in school had little relevance to their everyday viewing practices. Yet they also reveal that adopting a critical, 'depth-seeking' discourse is not a simple means by which we show understanding. It threatens students' desiring investments in unjust social relations and puts at risk identities produced through differentiation from others. Neil's reference to the talk show *Ricky Lake* implies that 'discussing' positions one as feminine, while Kevin's parody elides intellectualism, class difference and gay maleness. (In fact, their hostility to others is no more intense than Pearl's, in Chapter Four; but hers may pass unnoticed and unproblematised since her self-production as 'mature and intelligent' is rewarded by the school in a way that Neil and Kevin's may not be). Since subjectivity is multiple, they may be willing to assume such identities in school, but beyond its confines, they have commitments to a rather different social, moral and political order. If we value

only those students prepared to transgress this order (as Davies seems to, in her celebration of 'Mark', 108-113, or her own sons), then we have little to learn from Neil or Kevin. 'Justice' surely demands we accept that students work with what they've got, within circumstances that are neither of their own making nor under their conscious control, and that we should therefore respect their ways of knowing and being. This is in effect the ethical choice Kate makes when she allows them their difference, accepts that who they are in the classroom is distinct from who they are outside it. I for one am not sure what she would have gained by censuring them for their homophobia and sexism, just as I myself would not have appreciated being urged to 'go beyond the male-female dualism' (Davies) in more separatist phases of my existence. As a consequence, we may have to relinquish the fantasy of moral absolutes and easy answers, which I perceive when Luke writes of 'homophobic, racist or sexist texts or readings' that '*quite simply* oppress and subordinate others' (36, my emphasis). I hear it again in the voice of Davies's teacher-researcher, Chas, who when pointing out to children 'some of the ways in which they were falling into tellings that reconstituted a sexist world' (179), sounds less a friendly colleague than a hectoring adult who already knows what is 'right'. If we acknowledge why and how dearly students cling to identities predicated on the exclusion of others, we nevertheless cannot not respond, as Ellsworth states. Their words have consequences for those who are already in the place Neil and Kevin repudiate - other students, potentially, but also a middle class woman teacher. In the next chapter I will discuss how teachers might meet their obligations to students. But they also have obligations to themselves, and I think this may complicate what teachers do and say, as I will show.

In the same lesson, Kate tried to raise questions about the horror audience by giving students a set of statements, such as 'they're all about teenage traumas' or 'they give you nightmares'. Students were asked to identify who might say such a thing (that is, to locate the partiality of judgements), to discuss how true they thought they were, and to find examples from films that they knew of or had watched in class. One was 'women are always victims'.

1 Teacher: 'Women are always victims' - who's saying this, then?
2 Neil: feminist
3 Kevin: Some bird
4 Teacher: 'some bird' says that. // Why? Why would a man not say it, then?

Kevin: Cause women ain't always victims, (laughs) //
Teacher: Carry on, carry on
Kevin: Na, it's a woman saying that, innit, because, cause // she's one of them people
Neil: Cause they wouldn't say 'the women **and men** are always victims', so they had to say 'the women'
Teacher: So is it a **feminist** saying this, someone who's -
Neil: That's what **I** reckon
Teacher: - who feels that the cinema industry is not taking women seriously, or, is it someone who's just thinking, oh well, it's not **fair** or
Neil: Oh / yeah / it's not fair that the women always die
Kevin: ( )
Teacher: Right. And so, what do you think about female roles, Kevin, you said quite specifically they're not always the victims
Kevin: What do I think about what?
Neil: female roles
Teacher: How do you think women are portrayed, then? / (more sharply) What would you say in general about women in horror films?
Kevin (who's snuffling and giggling at these questions): **Some**times they're victims – (others start laughing)
Neil: and sometimes they're not!
David: Most of the time they're a bit stupid, int they, cause they get chased and -
Neil: Yeah, start running about -
Teacher: But if you think of it, in *Nightmare on Elm Street*, she, / obviously she's **trau**matised all the way through, but she's the one who eventually takes revenge
David: But in *Friday the 13th*, it's ( )
Teacher: So we've got scenes where women are chased into corners and, claustrophobic, like *Night of the Living Dead*, claustrophobic enclosed spaces, umm, // **but**, in **some** films, women do -
David: Yeah, like come out on top
Teacher: Come out on top, in the sense that they survive
David: Yeah
Teacher: which is what Nancy does umm// what people might, what the person might be saying here is that they feel that horror is **misogynist** (Writes on board: *misogynist - someone who doesn't like women*). Has anyone heard that word before? You have? // If something is misogynistic, or **a** misogynist, you might say, oh can't be doing with that Lee Brown (referring to one of the students in the class), he's a right misogynist,
Neil: So what does that mean?
Teacher: What you're saying, is, basically, they're women-hating, and they don't like women. And sometimes, / it's not necessarily // it's not necessarily a conscious thing, you wouldn't say, that Lee Brown, he hates women, he goes round, stealing their money and doing all this to women, what it might be, is that, it might be an unconscious thing as well, / so what people, what this might be saying is that unconsciously, perhaps, the **directors** of horror films -
Neil: - 've put the woman in just, cause that's how they feel
Teacher: Yeah, put the woman perhaps in a derogatory role
Neil: they didn't think about it, they just -
Teacher: Yeah, they just did it, they didn't think 'oh I'm going to make sure that this woman really sucks in this film'. They just thought, well, perhaps the conventions **dictate** / that women, that this woman's going to be a victim (writing on board). // And that doesn't necessarily mean that this person is never going to

sleep with a woman or isn't going to have relationships with women, they can still have, you know, they can still have girlfriends and boyfriends, they're not –
Neil: Still have girlfriends and boyfriends?! (laughter)
Teacher: (laughing) They can still have girlfriends if they're male, I mean, I guess you could get misogynistic females /umm //
Neil: Would that still mean they don't like females? // What's the one for not liking men?
Teacher: The one for not liking men? (joking) everyone likes men don't they?
Neil: I don't know, not on *Kilroy*
Teacher: I don't know // man hater (asks me what the word is, I don't know either)
Michael or Ian (aside): mister - ogynist
Neil (also aside): miss-der – mister-ogynist
Kevin: That's cause everybody likes men
Neil: do they?
Teacher: I mean, what people would argue, is that we live in a society that is sort of run by men for the benefit of men. And what this person would be arguing is that, well, these films are made by men for the benefit of men, and women are kind of treated as victims and - and - / men like watching women suffer. And it's a way - this person might argue, well, it's a way of, of keeping women **suppressed** // OK so (reads out the definition she has written on the board) - and horror films **have** been described as misogynistic / women-hating / as a genre - and I think, and Kevin has pointed to the fact that / and the fact that there are a lot of women who **like** horror films, certainly from watching the programme, maybe it's not as **simple** as that. // Umm. OK / so 'women are always victims', er, / and you've illustrated the points, by the ( ) the *Night of the Living Dead* clip that we watched might illustrate that as well /

One paradox here is that the knowledge *content* that is offered is similar to that of the previous extract. Kate's summary of the conventional 'feminist' position (72-9) encapsulates the very perspectives she drew on in teaching *Nightmare on Elm Street*. That is, that horror films primarily address men, that women are objectified as victims in order to afford sexual gratification to men (who like to see them suffer), that such representations have implications in the real world (they sustain patriarchy, keep women 'suppressed' by making them fearful). However, this exchange feels tense, awkward and unsafe. Fewer students join in; Kevin is overtly hostile and has to be coaxed (4, 6, 17-8) and bullied (21-20) into making his views explicit, partly with the support of Neil who loyally adds his voice to Kate's demand that Kevin discuss 'female roles' in a scholarly way (20). Kate does not 'own' or take responsibility for feminist knowledge even though it served her well in the earlier instance. It becomes a matter of what 'this person' or 'these people' (37, 48, 72, 73, 76) outside the classroom argue, and it is finally dismissed as over-simplified (81). In the process, men are exempted from any conscious malevolence and reassured that they will, nonetheless, still have

access to women's bodies (57) (and here, Kate may be rewarding Neil for his chivalry). Male homosexuality (men who do have boyfriends) becomes unthinkable (60), as does man-hating (everyone likes men, 64, 70). Men's socially endorsed fear and dislike of women is denied any specificity, since Michael / Ian's witty word play (another mimicry?) posits mister-ogyny as the mirror and equal of miss-ogyny (68-9).

This may partly be explained by how thin, moralistic and easily parodied the theory sounds when offered as a totalising account. The deliberately provocative and bald statement ('women are always...') opens it up to empirical refutation rather than an exploration of subtleties of portrayal or audience investments. (There are, after all, roughly equal numbers of male and female victims in modern horror, and more of the former in action films, as many have pointed out (e.g.: Paglia 1996)). Kate may also be wary of what such analyses offer female students. To postulate women's universal subjection may reinforce ideas that women are indeed 'a bit stupid' (26), not only in the films, but in real life too, for watching them or permitting such representations. She therefore tries to do justice to more recent feminist thinking such as Clover's 'final girl' argument about female survivors who 'come out on top' (a point of which David is clearly aware, 34) and to women audiences for horror (80).

But more significant, I would argue, are the consequences of an explicit reference to gender for group relations in this particular context. Kevin makes the putative speaker identifiable as 'other' by referring to her in sexist terms, as 'some bird' (4), and thereby forces a taking of sides. For Kate to assume for herself the voice of feminism carries the risk that she would situate herself outside and against the group, to become 'some bird', 'one of them people' (7-8) - or even an (implicitly lesbian) 'man hater' - rather than the loved teacher who belongs within it. The gendered and sexualised dynamics of the classroom, the teacher's sense of identity and her affective bonds with her students complicate the position she is prepared to adopt.

In not being explicit about her own relation to feminist critique, Kate runs counter to the prescriptions of critical and feminist pedagogy that teachers should declare their own stances. Some hold that by doing so they will demystify their

authority, divest themselves of power by making their position visible and placing it alongside other views for debate (Giroux 1997). Luke by contrast sees it as resisting the 'potentially disastrous' consequences of a false feminist humility that, by disclaiming any claim to expert knowledge or skills, maintains women teachers as nurturing and lacking in authority and sexual identity. Yet these exhortations, I would argue, are not themselves ethical, in that they require Kate *not to care*. Not to care, in the first place, how students might respond, what they might think of her, even when she knows already that an overtly feminist position will not gain her admiration, respect or prestige. It demands also that she not care about herself, that she give up the pleasures of inclusion, that she not be self-interested and become, in effect, a nobody. McWilliam refers appositely to this as the heroic, martyred, 'missionary position' of critical pedagogy (1997). Yet it is precisely because Kate is not a mere 'facilitator', a detached dispenser of wisdom, that she chooses the muddy compromise of continued involvement over the abstract virtue of moral rectitude. Perhaps I defend her because I remember the many times when I too have failed to be 'out' enough about my views, because I wanted to stay within the magic circle of the classroom rather than be alienated from it.

Moreover, 'being a feminist' here would close down the seductive power of Kate's teaching. McWilliam cites a definition of seductive power as 'the power to achieve authority and to produce involvement', arguing that many official discourses about teaching, including anti-abuse lobbying, deny teachers 'the possibility of any claim to seductive power or their own embodied pleasure in the pedagogical act' (McWilliam 1997: 227). In the previous exchange, Kate achieved such authority and produced involvement, by 'doing' feminism, albeit without naming it as such. It enabled her to position herself as sexually knowing, powerful and agentic (a woman who says 'cunt' and 'penis') rather than maternal and nurturing. Through her provocative 'difference' from her students she aroused their interest and desire to learn and participate, whilst caring for herself enough to wrest the pleasures of the erotic, of flirtation, from the daily teaching grind. As I hope to have shown, the flow of power was not all one-way; the male students who participated were not passively seduced or abused and were amply able to resist the teacher's demands when they wished.

Yet all this is not to suggest that the teaching here is beyond reproach. Women students have been hitherto largely silent, although as I will show in the next chapters this is not because they have nothing to say. In the second extract Kate may not be asking them because she does not want to put them in the awkward position she finds herself in. But as we have seen, many analyses of horror, including feminist ones, tend to position men as the more interested and thus more interesting viewers, and the desire to make them speak their truth may be reinforced by the pastoral legacy of critical pedagogy. Further, when Kate wants to personalise the meaning of misogyny, she selects Lee, who was not a favoured student; he frequently missed classes, and when he was present, was detached and rarely contributed. When she speaks of misogynists 'stealing women's money' (47) – and the negative prefix does not counteract the force of putting the idea into discourse - I wonder whether she is expressing the resentment she feels at those (men?) who take the precious things she offers without acknowledgement or return. As she herself says, it's 'not necessarily a conscious thing' (45-6), but it does again indicate the 'darker side' of classroom life, its exclusions and hostilities.

Conclusion

I want to insist on an analysis of pedagogy that is attentive to the relations to ourselves as well as to others that emerge from it, that can articulate the role of care, love and passion – but not selflessness. Understanding teaching as a collaborative, embodied and ontological endeavour as well as an epistemological one, requires a more acute analysis of the actual dynamics between, and desiring investments, of all participants. The dominant discourses available fail to do this, instead increasing pressure on teachers to see themselves as the unique providers of what students lack (knowledge and tools of analysis). Recent conceptualisations of the social nature of learning do move us towards an analysis that is more sensitive to the relations of the classroom. I have argued that we should be more respectful of the strategies teachers and students have already evolved for managing their environments, and not demand they sacrifice their existing identities and commitments. I have also noted that what 'textual analysis' tells us about meaning seems to be in many cases inadequate or over-simplified. This is partly because teaching itself constructs meanings in the

process of trying to formulate what is 'in' the text. Thus we need to acknowledge how it functions performatively within the classroom, what it allows to be spoken or brought into being, particularly within group relations. Reckoning with such issues may indeed involve us in ethical compromises, and require us to give up 'critical viewer' as the most preferred identity for students, or detached 'facilitator' for teachers. I have suggested that, rather than seeking depth and single, predetermined meanings, teaching should place more emphasis on association and resemblance. I have indicated how students' concrete, local knowledge might be valued as a means by which they come to understand what is new or different. In the next chapters I will elaborate on this last point in particular.

Chapter Six - Being in the Classroom: Of White and Woolly Gloves

> *The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have already known*
>
> *Wittgenstein*

In this chapter I move between the students' actual production work and the teaching that provided discourses and subject positions from which students were to understand it, interrogating each in the light of the other. Postmodern perspectives on the constitution of subjectivity in language, I will argue, can help educators rethink their anxieties about inviting students to work within the conventions of genres considered 'problematic', and their devaluation of expressions of 'feeling' or 'experience' in students' writing.

Rethinking Intention and Agency

As I have argued, dominant paradigms of media education, when they do consider practical work, demand that students produce something that is not 'like', but 'totally different' from the mainstream media in order to demonstrate their critical autonomy from them. The more emergent production-based paradigm views popular genres as a resource for the construction of identity and for learning and sense-making capacities, rather than as ideologically contaminating and limiting. It often encourages teachers not to restrain children's work in order to permit their informal interests into the curriculum (e.g.: Grace and Tobin 1998). It challenges the idea that imitation (or 'cultural reproduction') of familiar forms is an uncritical process. Moss gives the debate some historical perspective by reminding readers of its uses in Renaissance education (Moss 1989: 32), and comparisons have been made with contemporary disciplines such as Art, which encourage and promote learning from models and patterns (Grahame 1995). Researchers have demonstrated the high levels of analytic, observational and technical skills imitation involves, stressing how students 'rework' and 'reuse' conventions (Buckingham 1995b; Buckingham 1998; Grace and Tobin 1998; Grahame 1995; Moss 1989). They explore the dynamics and pleasures of practical work in group contexts; in more celebratory accounts, these are reclaimed as ultimately 'pro-social', building a 'sense of community' in the classroom (Grace and Tobin 1998: 56).

However, even within this model, writers tend to equivocate over the question of whether imitation is inevitable or 'almost inevitable' (Grahame 1995: 105). They introduce a hierarchy of inferior and superior forms, as if imitation is a first stage on the way to something better and more critical. Grahame contrasts 'pastiche', 'straightforward' or 'unadorned' use of conventions with 'more self-conscious and elaborate', 'more interpretative and innovative' work (105, 136); Grace and Tobin, videos that 'merely reproduce' their sources with those that 'undermine' them and are transgressive (op. cit.: 56); Buckingham, 'using' versus 'simply reproducing' stereotypes (1998: 75). They locate the radical potential of production work almost exclusively in parody which is said to provide 'a space for critique and change' (Grace, 49), or have 'essential ambiguity'; '"Having a laugh" ... very effectively provides a kind of ambiguity, a space for play, in which meanings cannot be fixed once and for all' (Buckingham 1998: 84, 78-9). Parody seems to be valued either because it reveals an originating humour or mastery ('knowing distance', Buckingham, 66), or because of its effects (laughter, which Grace and Tobin see as a social leveller and creator of community and interaction). It is then distinguished from what Grace and Tobin call the 'darker side' of the carnivalesque, involving 'cruelty and hurtful stereotypes' (49), or 'violence, racism and other objectionable subject matter' (56). Buckingham discusses the 'problematic' nature of the 'undeniably offensive' stereotypes produced by 'classic adolescent homophobics' (75). In relation to questionable material, Grace and Tobin tell us, 'In some cases, the groups themselves dismissed these ideas, and in others the teachers exercised their veto' (49). The writers sometimes express anxieties that such directiveness contradicts their commitment to a student-centred pedagogy that 'gives students a voice', but implicitly justify it on the basis of their obligations to others within and beyond the classroom (e.g. ibid. 45).

Hunter's work, to which I have referred throughout this thesis, reassures teachers that they should 'feel quite comfortable in exercising this sort of moral discipline' (Hunter 1996: 10). His view of English (and by implication Media Studies) as a pastoral 'pedagogical milieu' in which specific ethical and literate abilities are formed, means that a combination of students' self-revelation and their problematisation and supervision by teachers is productive and thus

appropriate. It is a means by which students achieve the 'freedom' of learning to govern their own conduct rather than of self-determination, coming to internalise the tutelary gaze of the teacher (and hence to 'dismiss' offensive material themselves, for example). My concern in these chapters therefore is not to challenge the form of this pedagogy in its entirety, but to rethink the function and utility of some specific techniques, in particular by looking more closely at the theory of language and agency on which these accounts of production work rest.

When the authors above describe parody as ambiguous, they suggest that elsewhere, meaning can be objectively determined – as 'objectionable', etc. Where they attempt to evaluate work by reference to the more or less benign sources from which it is derived (knowingness, humour or cruelty), they posit an intention that exists outside the workings of (media) language. Finally, when they identify some representations as 'hurtful' or 'offensive', they see them as efficacious and damaging, just as in Chapter One, I noted how *Beyond Blame* and other educators write of media that 'assault' and 'bombard' audiences.

As Grace and Tobin's work shows, in practice – and in the last resort – they uphold teachers' right to adjudicate what is or is not acceptable. This is potentially unaccountable and unreflexive, as I suggested in relation to Davies's work. The condemnatory position that 'vetoes' might itself be said to partake of violence, but instead it is presented as a moral counter to the eruption of an uninvited presence into the otherwise collective and relatively innocent scene of the classroom. Moreover, they draw boundaries generally at the point of (violent, sexist or racist) 'content' whose meaning is so often determined by discourses of 'effects', by aesthetic understandings and cultural hierarchies. They are thus liable to discriminate also against those audiences who take pleasure in it.

Peering through form to the prior purpose of an exterior subject who uses language as a vehicle can lead to vanity or paranoia of the sort discussed in the previous chapter. When Davies and Masterman insist on 'oppositional' productions, they seek the spectacular marks of a critical consciousness in which they see themselves again. When this is not forthcoming, the 'sinister intention' of those they survey is presumed but can only be guessed at, as a teacher interviewed by Barker and Brooks conveys in a powerfully disturbing

comment: 'I do not want to know what goes on in the minds of some of the children I have to stand in front of. And I ... I'm utterly terrified at the prospect sometimes if I take it seriously' (1998: 297). In Chapters One and Two, I noted how Browne and Pennell take the comment of a young offender, that a violent representation in a film was a 'good idea', or Philo a child's that it would be 'cool to blow someone away', as prefiguring what they might actually do. The psycho-dynamics of the encounter with otherness mesh with the history of 'respectable fears' (of working class young men in particular) and lead them to find in their words only threat and aggression. Since it is likely that the words teachers find distasteful will come from our most feared 'others', it may be more important to reflect on our own fantasies than to veto theirs.

A position that forbids hurtful representations on behalf of (unspecified) vulnerable others risks reinforcing their subordinate and victim status, as if they cannot respond themselves. It can lead to conflict between teachers and those students who resist such censorship. In evaluation interviews, I solicited students' advice for teachers of horror. David proposed: 'I think you've just got to let em get on with it, like, do their own thing, cause if the teacher comes up and like starts saying "oh no, you can't do that, it's a bit too gory", I think they won't enjoy it as much any more and the films won't be as good in the end'. Predictably, I asked whether he would draw the line at anything, such as rape or cannibalism. He thought for a while and then said no, referring to the fact that the work involved still images rather than a video camera, 'so you don't get, like, the whole thing'. At the time, I found his response rather unsatisfactory, but in Chapter Seven I will explain how I have tried to build on his insight into the productive limits of technology.

Neither paradigm of media education, that is, engages fully with postmodern perspectives that insist we are decentred subjects constructed by language, discourses, desire and the unconscious. I will argue that these can move forward debates about media violence and about how teachers can proceed in the classroom. I will consider especially the work of Judith Butler on the political implications of the use of Austin's theory of illocutionary speech acts by various social movements such as anti-racist, feminist anti-pornography, conservative anti-rap, anti-abortionist and gay 'outing' groups (1997). The notion that ('hate')

speech is a form of conduct, she notes, combines linguistic and physical vocabularies in which words and representations are said to 'wound', to violate and to act. These groups share no obvious political agenda, but by assuming that language is felicitous (able alone to initiate consequences and have effects), they tend to strengthen demands for legislative interventions by the state to regulate it, rather than enabling resistance by those whom it addresses. She argues that we use such metaphors because there is no language that speaks of our 'linguistic vulnerability', that is the condition of our constitution in language, 'that we have by virtue of being interpellated kinds of being, dependent on the address of the Other in order to be. .... There is no way to protect against that primary vulnerability and susceptibility to the call of recognition that solicits existence, to that primary dependency on a language we never made in order to acquire a tentative ontological status' (Butler 1997: 26). On this reading, particular representations considered 'violent' or 'objectionable' perhaps stand in for and displace fears about the violent possibilities within all language, which 'injures' us by disallowing our fantasies of 'radical autonomy' and self-creation (ibid.).

The modernist project of education, founded on precisely this fantasy of producing a self-mastering sovereign subject, is profoundly threatened by its dispersal into an anonymous field of language structures and matrices of power relations (Usher and Edwards 1994). If we are formed in language, then that formative power precedes and shapes any decisions or actions we might take. Masterman's condemnation of 'cultural reproduction' as 'enslaving' and producing 'deference and conformity' might be taken as an anxious defence against acknowledging our reliance on forms that pre-exist us, and against the terror of undecidability (for 'who speaks when conventions speak?' (Butler 1997: 25)). An argument that media production work - like speaking - is necessarily dependent on a language filled with meanings that we borrow but cannot control, would shift how we read it, since it is always derivative and its effects never certain. Teachers would have to give up assessing it on the basis of its supposed animating intention, or their entitlement to curtail it, as if there are criteria by which we can distinguish in advance between invidious and desirable uses of language.

However, this does not mean that students have no agency or that they can be exempted from responsibility for their words; nor does it dismiss teachers' concerns for social justice or to enhance students' reflective capacities. Language, Butler argues, may 'sustain as well as threaten', not in its content, but through the address that brings us into being and thereby gives us the possibility of both speaking (agency) and answering back (resistance). Our responsibility lies in our 'repetition' rather than 'origination' of language, for what meanings we sustain or challenge when we use it (27). But this is more a question of context (time, place and audience) than intention. If some speech acts can be unhappy or infelicitous, then none are necessarily efficacious as hate speech theory supposes. Butler takes up Derrida's work on the inevitable iterability of language (Derrida 1977). Each new utterance performs a 'break' with context that allows for reinscription and misappropriation rather than simple reproduction of meanings (Butler 1997: 147). In effect she argues for the strategy of resistance that Davies, in the extract considered in Chapter Five, uses, although Davies does not recognise it as such. Davies cites Brian's pun, breaking with the context in which it was uttered, giving it a new meaning by placing it in her feminist academic textbook and relating it to the words of a rapist. Similarly, by re-citing it myself I hope to have again shifted how we read it. I will use Butler's arguments to show that teachers can construct conditions in the classroom that exploit the faultlines and aporia in all representations in order to return meaning to speakers in a different form. In so doing, they can promote reflection and resistance by students themselves, within the discourses and practices of everyday life, rather than relying on a gesture of censorship delivered from above.

I now hope to make these arguments more concrete. In the next section, I will consider their implications for how we respond to students, by analysing in detail one particular practical production that is not parodic, and thus raises questions about work that has no clear transgressive purpose behind it. I then discuss how the teaching I observed and the requirements of academic writing constructed and constrained the terms within which students could think about themselves and often prevented them taking responsibility for what they did or giving meaningful accounts of their learning. In the next chapter, I consider strategies

that both increase students' accountability for their work and contribute to the development of more politically and ethically desirable pedagogies.

White Gloves

In the first case study with Kate, a student interviewed during a lesson offered the following outline of a film called *White Gloves*:

> It's set in a hospital (...) and, what it's going to be is, he's Spanish and he's against, like, the English, he doesn't like the English, he's got some sort of chip against them, and he's working in the old wards, and, the old people annoy him and that, so he begins to get frustrated and it's so easy just to kill them off anyway, just, you know, because they're old and there's no question why they're dying, because they're old anyway, so he starts beginning to kill them off and he gets this great sense of buzz out of just killing these women - and men, and then it sort of moves along, because the buzz sort of goes after a while, because it's getting boring, you know, and he begins, like, the young nurses and that, following them home, raping them, slaughtering them, you know, beating them up in the forest nearby and then an undercover detective gets set on the case to investigate and and he - as a porter - and he, no one suspects this kind Spanish man to be doing this, but then a lot of investigation goes on and they do end up finding him, but he goes back to Spain, and then so, that's the ending - but I don't know, I think I've gotta make a better ending cause like -
> Sara: So he gets away with it?
> Student: Well I *think* he does, yeah, but you know, he kills, he moves on to the nurses and it gets more gory and it begins to get a bit more sexual and every time he does his murder he puts like the white gloves on, them latex gloves on, so I've got loads of pictures of the latex gloves and everything. (...) he does it very cleverly and no fingerprints (...) so that he wouldn't get caught or anything

Anti-violence and radical educators might say that this piece proves that immersion in media violence leads to an unthinking acceptance of sexist, ageist, and racist values. According to those definitions which take only the rejection of violence as evidence of 'being critical', it has failed to evaluate the media critically. It regards ethnicity as a sufficient motivation for murder (the Spanish killer has 'some sort of chip' against the English, 2-3), and old people as superfluous and dispensable (4-6: on the video cover, they are described as 'the elderly things'). In reproducing the dominant conventions of serial killer films, in which men victimise women through rape and slaughter (11), it might be described as a 'lesson in gender roles, fear and power'[1]. Similar concerns were

[1] Such is George Gerbner's description of Red Riding Hood (CEM website, 'Letter from the Founder'). Recall that in Chapter One I noted that Giroux also describes Hollywood as a 'teaching machine' (Giroux 1995).

expressed by most of the teachers to whom I have shown this extract. Their comments often concern its aesthetics: they describe it as 'just a gore fest', criticise it for its failure to '"get" the conventions' of horror, for its lack of controlled structure - it 'doesn't go anywhere'. Their proposals to help the student develop the work include not showing the monster, elaborating motives, characters and relationships.

As with Richard, a student discussed below, these may be partly explained as a mismatch between teachers' and students' understanding of horror conventions. However, teachers also use the alleged failures of the scenario in order to handle their emotional reactions to it. It is clear that they find its sexual violence 'disturbing' as well, as indeed did I when I first heard it. When I give them the extract without mentioning the gender of the student, it is nearly always assumed that it is by a boy. In this case, their reactions range from irritation ('he's having a laugh', 'he's relishing being given a licence') to outrage ('I would tell the student that this is totally unacceptable'). When I tell them the speaker is female, they become worried instead; 'I think it's sad that a teenage girl is producing something like this'. These 'pastoral' responses draw on common sense assumptions about 'identification' or positioning – that male spectators identify with killers and female with victims. They presume to know what the male student's intention is, and this is sometimes judged sufficient grounds for a violent response of censorship. Expressing pity for a female speaker implies that horror has demeaned and subordinated her, as hate speech theory posits. For a woman to take up its misogynist address – to speak within the terms it offers – is masochistic and self-hating. However, since its producer, Lauren, was neither delinquent nor passive, but a mature 16-year-old, able to hold her own in a class generally dominated by boys, I want to consider instead the question of what we can learn from her. It is important to note that she has something of a passion for murderers. In a first interview, she and two female friends expressed considerable interest in death (two had visited mortuaries), horror and true crime genres. Lauren named *Silence of the Lambs* as her favourite film and described her collection of books on serial killers, many of which had been presents from family members. She had used particular cases, such as that of the 'real-life' Hannibal Lecter, a Russian who had murdered 53 people, as the basis for talks that she had given in a 'public speaking' group.

The video sequence she produced shows the killer arriving after dark at the hospital where he works, moving down empty corridors towards his victim who is strangled and left bleeding in her bed. An instrumental soundtrack from Pink Floyd lends a menacing tone to the images. The analyses of horror I considered in Chapter Two, by critics such as Barker, Pinedo, Sconce and Brophy, lead me to suggest that Lauren understands the conventions and aesthetics of horror rather well. What counts in her film is precisely the performance of familiar set pieces (death scenes), rather than narrative or character development. She is aware that she is addressing an audience, and carefully directs our interpretation. For instance, her scenario plays with the distinction between appearance and reality – 'no one suspects this kind Spanish man to be doing this' (13-14). The audience, however, is given knowledge denied to the fictional characters. Killer and victim are introduced in two credit shots at the beginning of the sequence that reveal their nature. 'Tony' is clearly villainous, since he is shown in close up, using a low camera angle; 'Lily', posed rather helplessly in a medium, high angle shot, is set up as a future victim. When these images are repeated, shortly before the murder, audience response to them has already been established. For much of the sequence, Tony is shot from behind, such that his identity and expression are partially hidden, creating a sense of threat and foreboding. For audiences familiar with the genre, the lack of point-of-view shots attributed to Lily would also be significant in marking her victim status (Clover 1992). Other images too are complex and sophisticated, using long shots of empty corridors, and the signs in the hospital ('Ward 11 Welcomes You'), to sinister and ironic effect. Thus, spectators' participation in the film is guided through a series of cues; suspense is created through the contrast between their awareness and Lily's ignorance, but they should not be shocked by her death, nor are they meant to 'identify' with either character. If we want to understand what the images might mean, it is more appropriate to place them in relation to those that have gone before than to speculate on Lauren's intention. We only 'know' that Tony is powerful because we 'know' what a low-angled shot means, from our previous encounters with such images. Lauren's control of the form alone indicates that she is not in thrall to the conventions (still less 'bombarded' by them). She may be relishing, not the content of the film, but the

role of 'teller of the tale', the novelty of which she marks on her video cover by changing her surname from 'Mott' to 'Alessi'.

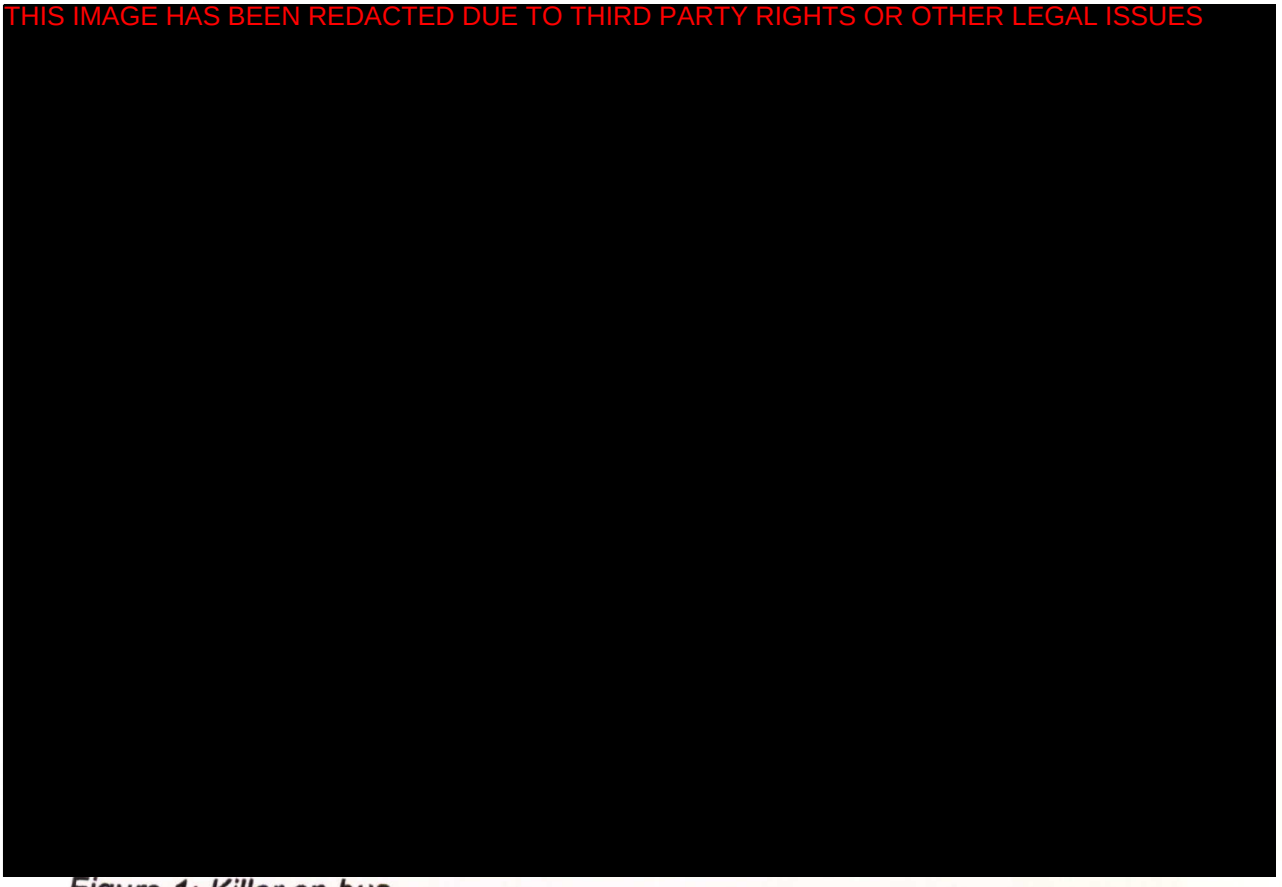

Figure 1: Killer on bus

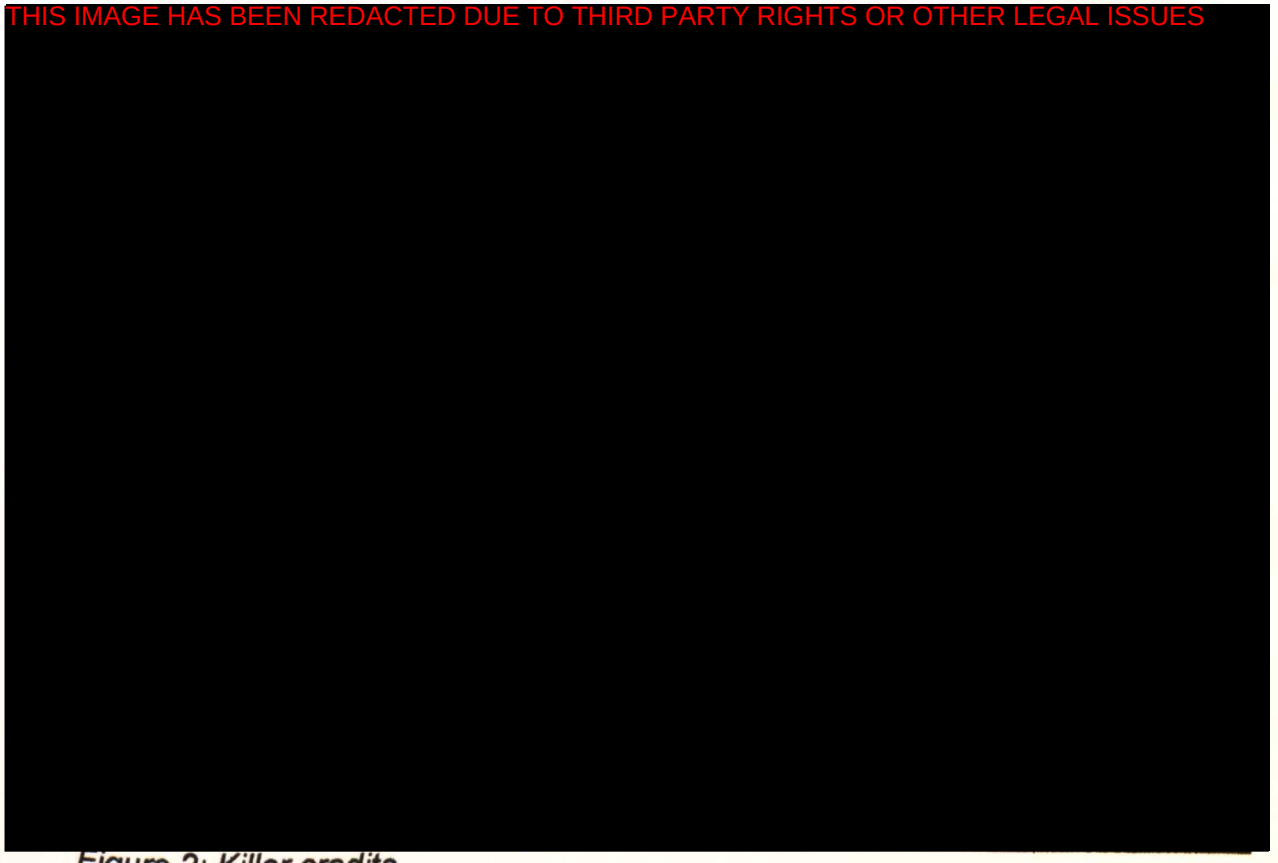

Figure 2: Killer credits

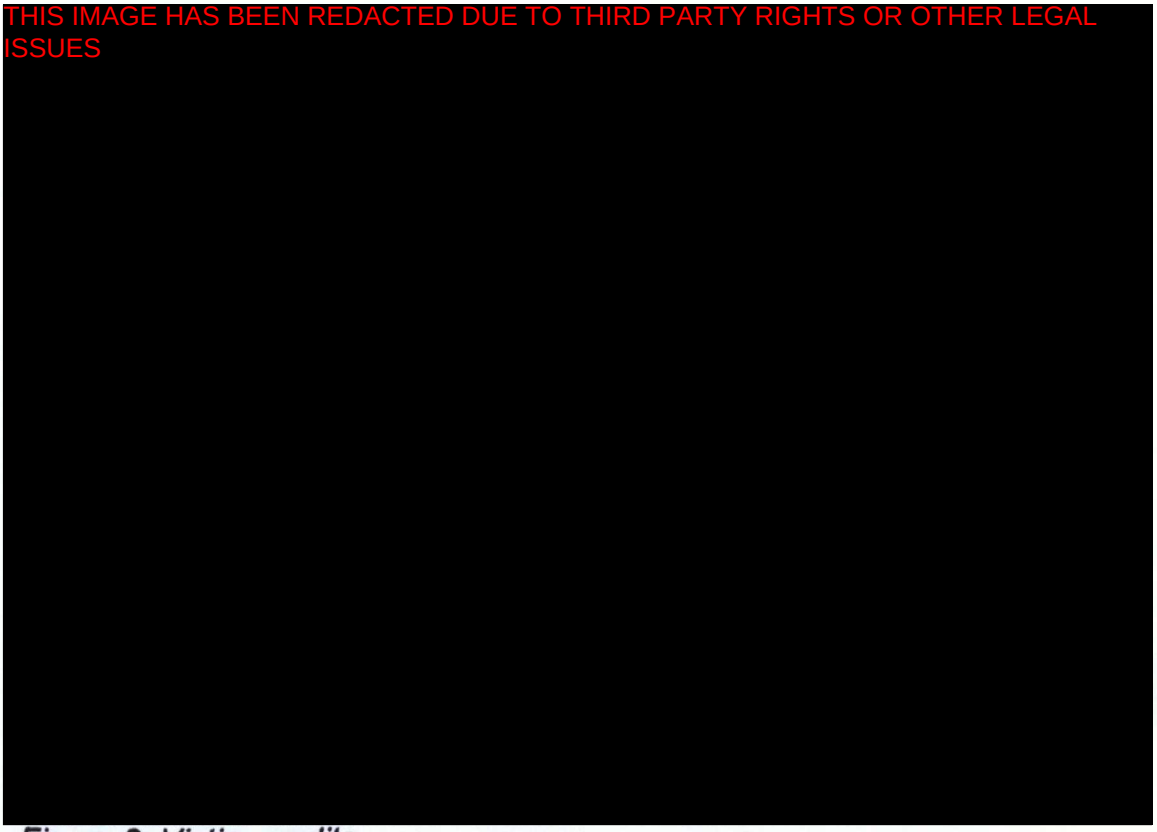

Figure 3: Victim credits

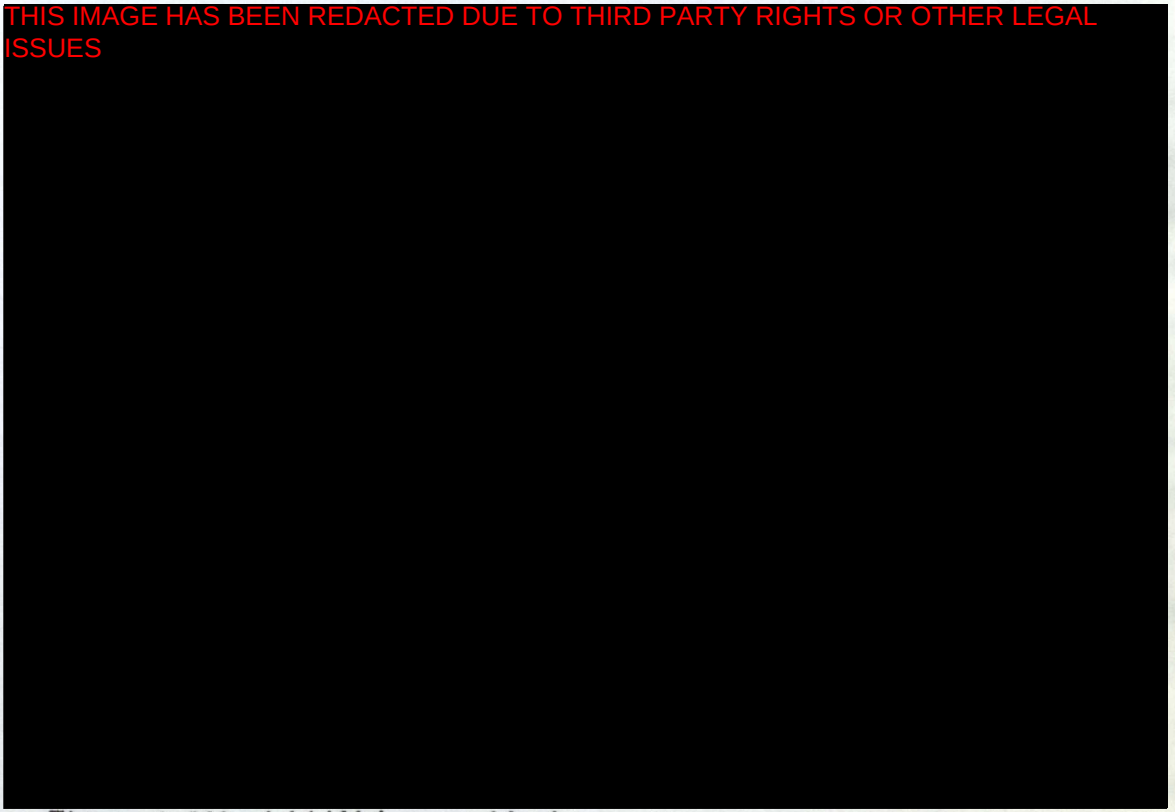

Figure 4: 'Ward 11 Welcomes You'

Figure 5: 'Strangle'

However, demonstrating Lauren's skill in producing a text that is similar to existing media may evade more fundamental questions about whether such 'serious' images of male power and female victims promote women's oppression. As we have seen, radical and feminist pedagogies make large claims about the empowering effects of replacing 'stereotypes' with alternative and 'positive' images, often – despite disclaimers - by a logic of simple role reversal. ('Can't she be a bit plump?' Chas asks of the female victim in the extract discussed in Chapter Five, Davies 1993: 105). Influenced by these ideas, I asked Lauren why she had not 'challenged conventions' in her work. She read this as a request to replace a violent male monster with a female one – to show, in her words, how 'a woman could, like, control a man'. She explained that she had not because she did not take GCSE Media Studies and this was the first video she had ever made. Like Grahame and other writers, she implied that more subversive work might have been possible with greater experience. However, the profound difficulty of constructing a female killer became clear to me in the interview mentioned above. I asked Lauren and her friends what they

thought about 'female serial killers in real life'[2], at which all three recoiled. Lauren exclaimed: 'They make me sick, they do make me sick, I don't know why, they make me more sick than the blokes doing it. Probably because I'm a woman anyway, (...) it just makes me feel really ill and I think that Rosemary West, oh, just wanna get her face and smash it, I mean that's how it makes me feel'. All agreed that women murderers are somehow 'worse' and 'weirder' than male ones; 'with men you can understand it', but 'with women it's not normal'.

Lauren and her friends are thus caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, images of mutilation, death and (male) violence clearly held a potent fascination for them. However, such interest was defined as a masculine preserve, as Lauren herself noted when she remarked quietly in one lesson 'I like horror, I must be abnormal'. Their view of gender assumes that there is a 'natural' element of aggressiveness in masculinity that makes men's (sexual) violence against women at least comprehensible. The violent woman is considered more evil and abhorrent, because she betrays her ascribed gender role of nurturance and motherhood. (For the record, this is not a quirk of ignorance on the part of teenage girls, but a view shared by most non-feminist 'experts' and commentators on the trials of the Yorkshire Ripper or Rosemary West. For discussion of these tendencies, see Cameron 1996; Cameron 1996/7; Cameron and Frazer 1987; Hollway 1981). Further, as I noted in the introduction, the coding of both aggression and desire as masculine means that violent women are often depicted as lesbian (Hart 1994). Young women who, like Lauren and her friends, identify as heterosexual, may therefore 'need not to know' (in Felman's terms) that women have any inherent aggressive potential, as admitting the possibility might disturb their understanding of their own sexual identity. However, violence can be imagined righteously to avenge a wrong, as Lauren fantasises 'smashing' Rosemary West's face. She also changed her scenario in response to (my) feedback that the two shots in which she 'introduces' her characters seemed to imply that Lily would play a greater role in the film, as early victims are not usually given extended credits. This was, I now feel, based on a misreading of their function. However, Lauren rewrote the ending, bringing back Lily from the dead to haunt Tony and make him 'regret everything'. In an interview she was quite well able to draw on a 'feminist'

[2] My question was of course misleading. Some feminist critics have argued that female serial killers do not in fact exist,

discourse to assert the pleasures that this would bring for women audiences. 'She has the power,' she said, 'I know she's dead and that, but she has got the power when she comes back, by haunting him and making him really like ill and crazy, so they'd probably be the good bits because, seeing him suffer for what he's done'. But when I pressed her to explain further her reasons for making a video with such conventional gender representations, she responded:

> I think society's made us like these silly like, that, I suppose it's in our genes as well, we are always the ones where, like if you watch it with your boyfriend, whatever, you cuddle up or whatever and you go 'Ooerh!'. You know, it's just the way / I don't know, you act, and it's just in your nature to feel as a woman, because we have all the other bonuses of having things bought for us, and that's just, I think that's just the different ways of life, and we are / we do get scared, because most of these films are based around us, and because we're the weaker, they've got this strength over us, and, all these rapes that go on like in the news and everything, you don't see many, you don't see men being raped in the news, it's always women being attacked / raped or you know mugged, because that's the way, we are just weaker and no one could change that

The 'common sense' ideologies of gender with which Lauren lives are incoherent and unsystematic. She asserts that feminine weakness is natural and inevitable – a question of genetics (1), what it is in your nature to feel as a woman (4-5), the way things are (6), that no one could change (12). Yet she simultaneously suggests that it is also a performance - the way you act (4), a protocol you follow when you 'cuddle up' and scream (3) – and a social construction, the way women have been 'made' (1). Gendered power relations are something of a hard-fought bargain, in which women's subordination (achieved in particular by the threat and reality of rape, 9-11, but also by cinematic representations, 7-8) is rewarded by rather unspecified bonuses ('having things bought for us', 5-6).

Lauren cannot use the video to express what she already thinks, because she does not speak of gender with a single voice. Nor does she lack a feminist analysis of patriarchy that we as teachers should supply so she can 'challenge the conventions'. Much of what she says suggests she understands it well enough, but is not prepared to pay the price – particularly in terms of relations with men - that a whole-hearted commitment to it might exact. She does not, therefore, need to accumulate more knowledge (that Hannibal Lecter is not in

with the possible exception of Rosemary West (Cameron 1996; Cameron 1996/7).

fact like real killers, that women can indeed be violent, or that raping women is wrong). She needs to explore what is puzzling for her, and I would suggest that the production work has enabled her to do so.

She follows horror conventions by making her male killer the most interesting character, both visually and narratively. We might argue that he acts as a convenient and valuable cypher that allows Lauren to explore those feelings and desires – such as, for power and control - socially prohibited to her as a woman. Alternatively, it could be said that she has simply disowned her own unacceptable emotions by projecting them outwards onto the monster. This might explain the positioning of the audience as observer of the killer, which encourages a moral distance from his actions. He, like Dracula, is foreign, coming from elsewhere to disrupt the safe space of an English suburban hospital; Lily's name underlines her 'whiteness' in contrast to Tony's ethnic otherness. His probable despatch in the final sequence might then reinforce existing value judgements of what is 'normal' and leave us and her feeling virtuously detached from the on-screen mayhem.

However, Lauren's name-change, from 'Mott' to the more exotic, less British-sounding 'Alessi', may suggest she is assimilating herself to the Spanish killer rather than firmly externalising him. We might also recall her initial lack of narrative closure – Tony may 'get away with it' (line 15 in her scenario) or at least, his punishment is not what most interests her. Moreover, she shows him as more and less than simply powerful. Before the murder, he prays by an altar; afterwards, stands in front of a mortuary with his hands up to his face, and in the final shot, is on his hands and knees in a posture of despair. The 'white gloves' give the film its title, and an image of two hands pulling on the gloves, accompanied by the byline 'NO Power, NO Murder, Without Them', dominates the video cover. We can only understand why these images are significant if we look at their context and the positions against which they speak. Lauren's visual construction of the killer emphasises his psychic struggle and subsequent remorse, and thus problematises her own conception of male violence as normal and requiring no special explanation. Secondly, the video cover suggests that power is not after all not a property securely possessed by virtue of (male) gender, but requires something else – an additional layer – before it can be

achieved. Potentially, such power is available to women too, just as their weakness can be a product of how they act rather than who they are.

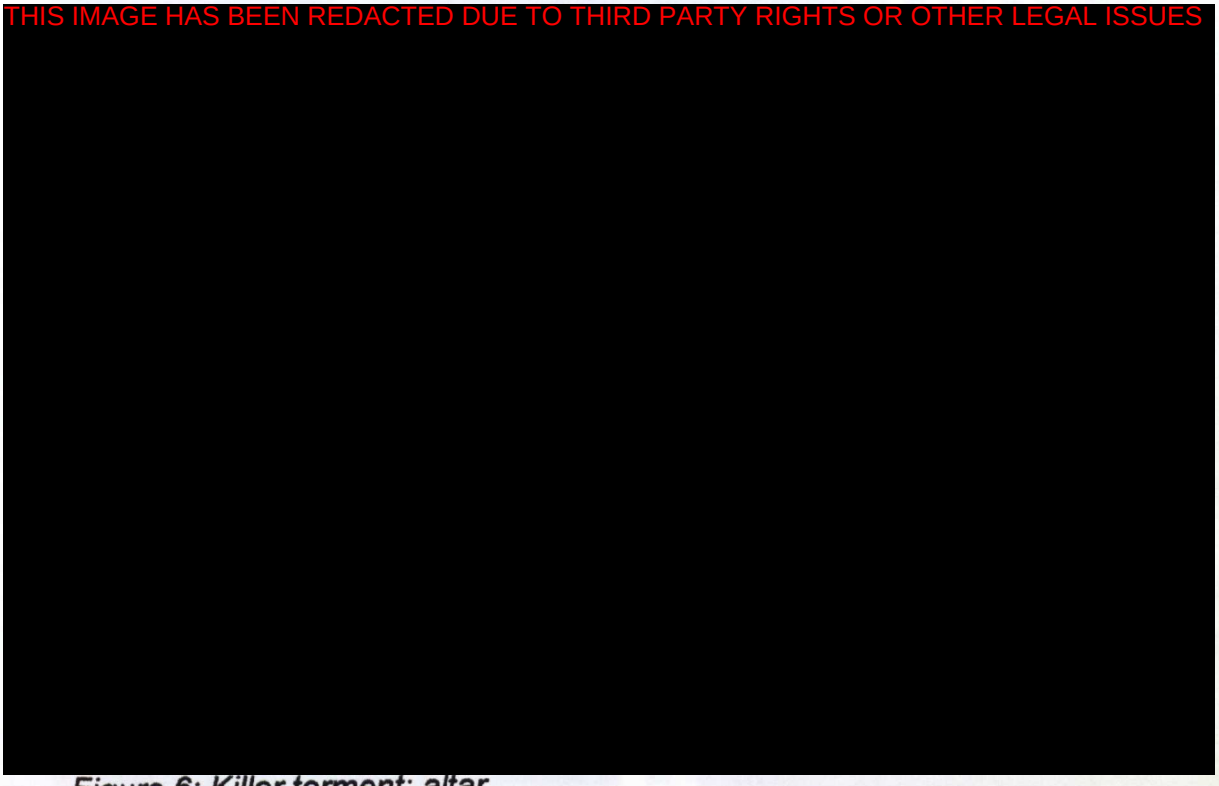

Figure 6: Killer torment: altar

Figure 7: Killer torment: mortuary

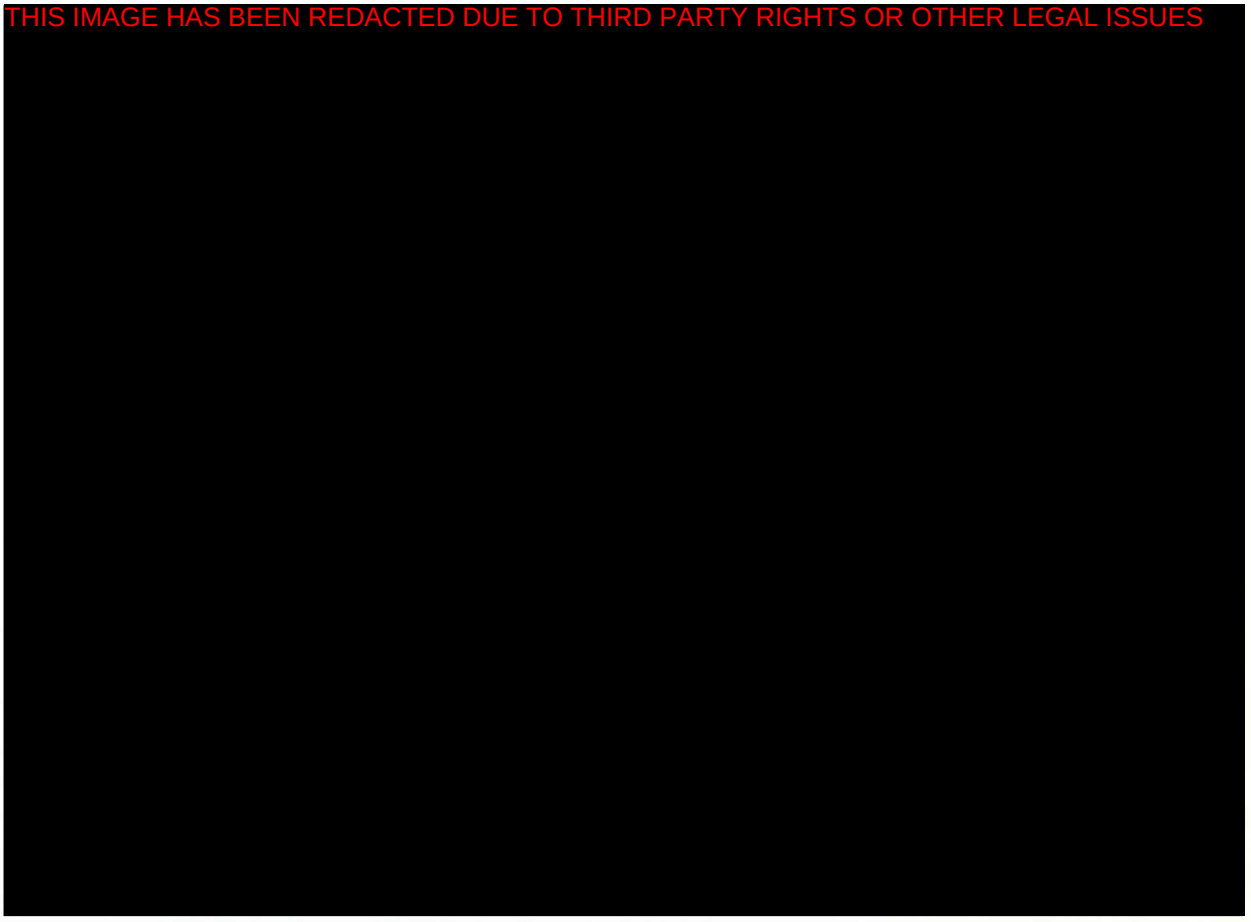

Figure 8: 'White Gloves' video cover

We might understand her agency as arising from within rather than outside horror conventions; they provide material with which she can think and argue about gender. As Butler suggests, being constituted in language is not the same as being determined by it. Lauren is open (vulnerable) to the address of horror and true crime genres, but by forming her, bringing her into being, it has also been enabling for her. She has heeded its call carefully and she makes use of its complexity and heterogeneity to speak back and make a difference. Moreover, her passion, rather than blinding her, has led her to see nuances and new possibilities where others, from the outside, cannot. And she is motivated rather than paralysed by the contradictions in the resources she already has, because they propel her into asking questions and finding answers she can live with, on her own terms. Read in this way, the work as a whole represents a small, temporary triumph for Lauren.

However, as teachers we must ask whether the pedagogic context has made any difference here. After all, Lauren has already used her interest in serial

killers to find a voice, reaching out to wider networks of social involvement in her 'public speaking' activities. Is she not the always-already skilled and competent subject that audience research so often presents? To specify further the positive functions of the work, we need to consider the modes of address of the classroom.

During the period of my observation, Lauren was addressed in a number of ways, by me and by her teachers. In my evaluation interview, for instance, I asked her to speak 'as a woman' about the gender representations of her video. She asserted that they ultimately reflected the truth that women 'are just weaker' than men, and later that she 'didn't feel guilty' about them. Her defensiveness may indicate that she read me as a judge, calling her sternly to account for herself within the terms of feminism, and ruling her a failure.

In her commentary she was required to write 'as a student', and she produced the following account:

> We began our first term by studying horror and the conventions of horror, we watched many different types of films and looked at the appeal, attractions and who horror is aimed at in general. We did a survey and everyone asked questions to different age groups and different sexes. We concluded that most women don't enjoy watching scary movies especially on their own... We did research to find out about what kind of themes are used and how they are shown within a horror, I discovered that males are usually used to represent the strong evil character also another popular theme is evil fighting against good... I now had a better background of horror and had some ideas for my film and the story... My work clearly shows masculinity, the killer being strong and powerful.

Lauren obligingly draws on progressive and modernist discourses of learning through doing and enlightenment through knowledge. 'We did research' (6), she tells her reader, through which she 'discovered' (7) facts about gender difference in the horror film and the audience. Yet she misrepresents both her own relation to horror and what she knows about it. The audience research concluded that 'most women don't enjoy watching scary movies' (5) so she is unwilling to write about herself as a woman who does. Moreover, she was aware before the course that 'males are usually used to represent the strong evil character' (7-8), and does something more interesting than simply repeat this in her own work. But in order to position herself as a 'good student', who obediently enacts what the teaching has shown her, she cannot tell us about this either.

However, in inviting Lauren to make a film, we interpellated her as a producer of representations, as 'writer and director'. In that fantasy space, Lauren can distribute herself across the roles she devises. When in her scenario she describes the killer's 'cleverness' in leaving no trace of his crimes, and the 'buzz' he experiences (23, 7), she is also able to express her own pride in creating the story and constructing the images. Likewise, she may cast her boyfriend as the killer on the basis that men are naturally more powerful than women, but in the process of production, she holds the camera and he has to do what she tells him. She thus in practice becomes what she cannot represent, a woman who 'controls a man'.

It is worth pausing to consider the problematic implications of my argument. Critical pedagogies have often encouraged students to speak out as bearers of particular identities, as citizens or as members of social groups. The permissible categories of the latter have proliferated along with analyses that stress our multiple positioning within hierarchies of oppression. Ellsworth, for instance, refers to students who spoke as disabled, fat, Jewish, lesbian or gay, White men against masculinist culture, Anglo-American, Chicana, of colour, middle class... (Ellsworth 1994 (1988)). It is sometimes implied that in doing so we 'name' our truth. However, if language precedes us, as Butler argues, there must be prior places to occupy (what she calls a 'domain of the speakable') before you can come into being and be recognised as a speaking subject. In the Introduction, I argued that feminist discourse in the 1980s offered a codified set of positions on horror which made it difficult to be both a feminist and a horror fan, and I would suggest that Lauren finds herself in a similar situation now. Her speech 'as a woman' about horror is impossible or unintelligible within the terms available to her, and leads to a sense of dissonance that she turns in on herself by calling herself 'abnormal' for liking it. Her silence in her commentary on the question of how she relates to horror may be less that she has not been empowered to write of it, than a resistance to the normalising effects of this discursive regime.

Further, by stressing who we speak *as* rather than who we speak *to*, these pedagogies ignore that classrooms are places where what we say will be shaped by our expectations of how it will be received (cf Turnbull 1998: 92-3). In some

universities, it may now be possible briefly to gain the floor by speaking as a woman, as black, as lesbian. I doubt whether Lauren, in a secondary school in Essex, can have any such confidence in how she will be heard. In the last chapter we saw how an explicitly gendered analysis provoked hostility that even the teacher was not prepared to withstand. In the long term, this suggests the importance of continuing to work to create climates of diverse entitlements to speak. In the short term, however, inviting Lauren to speak 'as a woman' will not necessarily help her speak up.

Finally, whilst a politics of identity has served many, including myself, as a means to access our speaking 'rights', in practice it can be used as a way of reminding us also of our responsibilities for those we thereby represent. When Giroux addresses media students as 'critical citizens', it is perhaps to recall them to their duty to penetrate beneath and not to linger at the seductive surface of 'cinematic violence', since it offers only 'brutal and grotesque images that serve to pollute and undermine how children and adults care, relate and respond to others' (Giroux 1995: 311). What he calls a 'moral accountability' that exposes Tarantino's alleged racism, misogyny and homophobia effectively silences audiences that enjoy such films, because they cannot speak within the terms he establishes as conditions for participation in the classroom. I would therefore distinguish my use of the term 'accountability' from his, since I hold that teachers too should be reflexive about the power relations their pedagogies construct, and responsive to the different meanings students make from texts. Nor do I see questions of 'ethics' as incompatible with those of pleasure.

In the previous chapter I argued that an ethical paradigm of media education would assess practices in terms of the relations to self and others they produce. The value of video-making for Lauren may have been that it allowed her to become someone other than a 'woman' or a 'student', with all the discursive burdens that those familiar identities entailed, and thereby to construct new relations to herself and those around her – even if only temporarily. Other students too emphasised the pleasures of practical work in interviews, but on the basis of the new identities and relationships it instantiated rather than the conceptual learning teachers might hope to hear about. For instance, many said they were pleased that they were 'trusted' to take equipment home overnight. A

seemingly minor detail was highly significant in the authoritarian atmosphere of the school in which they had spent so much of their lives. Similarly, in Chapter Four I argued that by speaking as film makers, students did not have to reproduce the discourses on cultural value that other modes of address seemed to demand. However, this is not just an argument in favour of practical work in itself. Some evidence suggests that who students can 'be' in productions may be as circumscribed in some contexts by adult fantasies and peer power relations as essay writing. (See, for instance, Buckingham's discussion of the coercive nature of group work in a youth and community context (1995a)). More broadly, it is for the importance of creating in classrooms realms of the 'imagination' that function to make identities contestable and new ways of being possible, that loosen the conventional patterning of educational power relations, even if they will never free them altogether.

Self-evaluation: pure lies

I will now discuss the teaching of 'genre' and 'audience' primarily in terms of students' perceptions of what they thought it demanded of them. As my brief analysis of Lauren's commentary suggested, self-evaluative written work within the wider institutional context of the school has its own conventions. It invites students to demonstrate evidence of learning from their course, within terms that they imagine will be intelligible to and rewarded by a putative judge. Unsurprisingly, students gave rather different versions in their interviews.

I will also outline briefly how, in the second phase of my research, Kate and I tried to resolve the dilemmas to which the first practice gave rise. However, at that point, my efforts focused on 'getting the theory right'. Not only did this lead to tensions between us, as I explained in Chapter Three, but as I will explore in relation to Richard's work, I now feel that the model was itself largely misguided.

Genre conventions: 'being different' and 'just thinking of it'

In the last chapter, I argued that the dominant paradigm of media education conceives of theory partly as a set of tools for undoing texts such that in their own production work students can appropriate and control the elements thereby

isolated. The concept of 'genre', on this understanding, enables identification of the formal features that recur across a range of films and provides a framework that allows students to manage and order a confusing terrain. Accordingly, in the first case study, Kate began the horror unit by screening extracts from films such as *Psycho* (1960), *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), various versions of *Dracula*, *Frankenstein* (1931), *Friday the 13th* (1980), *Evil Dead II*, *Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer*, *Video Dead* (all 1987). She initially asked students to look for horror conventions, which she glossed as 'what a horror film needs', or, 'the recipe', and noted on the whiteboard. For instance, 'typical characters' were listed as 'heroes and heroines', 'teenage characters', 'monsters and victims' 'heroes who are also victims', 'a doctor or a priest – religious characters who explain what is happening'. Settings were described as 'graveyards, forests, old houses, derelict, castles, remote', with some debate over whether Kate was right to add 'domestic settings', which would be more familiar to recent horror; iconography as 'full moon', 'crosses' and so on. Students also discussed themes and narratives. A similar approach was taken in relation to the whole films that were screened. As we saw in the previous chapter, Kate also raised questions about audience identifications and positioning through camerawork and editing, although the outcomes were rarely transferred onto the board (and hence into their notes). She also supplied some 'theory' handouts from Crane and Clover (Clover 1992; Crane 1994).

I noted the weaknesses of such circular genre approaches in Chapter Two. We might question whether the outcome was specific enough to horror (most texts have heroes and heroines, many, teenage characters; 'full moons' are surely icons of the romance too...). There was little reference to texts' historical and institutional provenance, the different audiences they address or their changing meanings over time. The very practice of showing the extracts first, and discussing only them, positioned students as lacking adequate knowledge of horror, yet it was probable that students could have produced similar lists without seeing any at all. Most significantly for my argument, students struggled to explain their own use of 'conventional' elements when it came to writing their commentaries. They had been given little sense of genre as a dynamic process, and as a result, many simply listed generic features: 'The typical settings or location in my horror film are the forests, graveyard, derelict houses and

darkness which are typical to many other films' (Mehrin). Others described conventions in ways that were relevant to their own work, but unrelated to the notes they had taken: 'The generic conventions which I have used are the same as many films which include most of iconography – Black cat, fangs, blood, pale faces, deformity and red eyes' (Carly).

Many spontaneously discussed the extent to which they had 'broken the codes': 'My film has the young girl escape and contact the help, she is the heroine. A lot of films are like this (...) they have strong power minded woman, this shows me that as films progress woman being helpless will be a thing of the past' (Leah). 'My approach is challenging the representation which is that I have not used the stereotypical monster in my film, I have not used an ugly scary looking monster in my film instead I have used an ordinary looking female to play the part' (Mehrin). '(I used) a female killer because I thought that male killers were too common and I wanted to do something different' (Maria). 'I think challenging the typical stereotype in this film will hopefully give it appeal and originality to its audience' (Carly). They read the practical work as a 'test' of 'what sort of a grasp you had on the genre of horror', which had to be demonstrated through their 'original' ideas (Kevin). They thus positioned themselves as distinctive, enlightened individuals, masterful and in control in a world in which change and improvement are both favoured and expected. They valued the new (what is 'original', 'different' and 'progressive') over the old ('stereotyping'), creativity over 'reproduction', and 'equal opportunities' (for women to be 'power minded' killers, or for 'people of all races, ages and sexes' to be victims (Michael)).

There was a good deal of post-hoc rationalisation in these accounts. As many students admitted in interviews, their choice of monster or victim was more often than not dictated by which of their friends was willing to play which role, or was even more arbitrary. David explained that he had a woman kill men rather than the other way round:

Sara: And why did you do that?
David: Cause I wanted to make it different from most of them, you see, someone goes mad and they go round killing people, and it's mostly, like, they kill a woman, so I changed it
Sara: Why do you think it is that there are so many women killed in horror films?

David: I dunno, like, most of them are chosen to be like a bit vulnerable, like, on their own, // not sure really
Sara: So did you want to present an image of men being vulnerable in your film?
David: Yeah, cause I just wanted to change it back cause you always get like the woman being killed so I thought I'd change it round
Sara: And how do you think an audience would respond to that?
David: I don't think it would really make any difference, cause they just watch it just to see people getting killed n that don't they, so, I don't think it would make a difference
Sara: So you don't think the audience cares whether it's a male victim or a female victim?
David: No, not really, they just wanna see people being killed

David understands that women are more frequently represented as victims because they are able to signify vulnerability (7), but depicting a female monster serves to make his film 'different' (2) rather than to enable new self-perceptions for male audiences. He may be right, since as I argued in the last chapter, the concept of 'positioning' on gendered lines is simplistic, and also because, as Sconce suggests, contemporary audiences may indeed be more interested in 'visual stimulation' than niceties of characterisation. Yet there is an irony here. Lauren follows conventions because she cares so much about the social and personal implications of gender representations (as critical pedagogues urge students to do), David does not because he cares so little about them; but he is likely to be more highly rewarded for his innovation.

Any evidence of 'influence' was seen as a disappointing mark of subordination. Hence Alex confesses that he 'felt to be controlled' by conventions, Stephen that he 'found it very difficult to break away from generic conventions. This is mainly because I am not a fan of the horror genre'. Carly explained to me how she had developed a vampire narrative but 'changed it a bit' because the vampires attacked victims 'in their dreams, and they have nightmares based on it in their sleep'. I remarked that it sounded a bit like *Nightmare on Elm Street*:

> Carly (indignantly): No! I was thinking, oh, people are going to think I've copied that, but it wasn't, I thought of it and after I wrote it I realised that it sounded a bit like *Nightmare on Elm Street*
> Sara: So you just had the idea
> Carly: Yeah, cause I read a lot of books like that and just got the ideas from that really.

Carly reads me as accusing her of 'copying', which she knows is considered an academic 'crime'. She wants to insist that she is a neophyte auteur whose

resources come entirely from within. Since this claim is somewhat untenable, she compromises firstly by recognising commonality with other texts only after the creative act, and secondly by acknowledging a debt from literature, which has a higher status within the school and is a more solitary, individual activity. Neil and Peter evolved a rather different justification during their discussion of the latter's film, *Billy's Back*, in which 'Billy' returns from the dead to wreak revenge on his family:

Peter: When he was younger, right, there's a family of four, like mum, dad, Billy and this younger daughter, right, and she was like really you know favoured by the parents, cause she was, she was doing well in school and everything and sports and Billy was a bit mental and they didn't really like Billy and he used to get abused and (laughing) traumatised, right, so one year they went on this fishing trip, and umm it's him and his dad on the boat and his dad asked him to do something, he done it wrong and his dad got into an argument, and his dad hit im off the boat, and he fell into the lake, and he couldn't swim, and his dad just watched him sink to the bottom and die, like, drowned
Neil: A bit like whatsisname, Jason, // (Peter looks at him) I'm not saying it's a bad thing!
Peter: No
Neil: (to me) It was, wasn't it? Didn't he,
Peter: what happened to Jason?
Neil: I dunno, but it was in the lake though
Sara: Well yeah, he drowned and nobody helped him (Neil gives a triumphant laugh) but -
Peter: They were his family
Sara: Yeah, the story behind it is quite different
Peter: Yes!
Neil: OK, sorry
Sara: Is it a bad thing to echo other horror films?
Peter: No, cause a lot of professional horror films echo other horror films don't they
Sara: So it could be quite a positive thing to talk about in the commentary (...)
Neil: Yeah, you could mention that! that some of your ideas came from *Friday the 13th*
Peter: I've already mentioned it
Sara: Yeah, or just that audiences might make those connections - so Billy might be horrific because people know how horrific Jason is (....) So where did your idea for the family element of Billy's Back come from?
Neil: It happened to you as a child
Peter: (laughs) I dunno, just made it up - "imagination", I thought, you know //
Sara: Where have you heard similar stories?
Peter: // Well umm, no, it's cause like the Kruger films (clears throat) and *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, they were all based on like revenge weren't they, and that's where I got my idea from, cause they're really like successful films to get ideas from em, and I twisted the storyline a bit n it's all right // that's basically it

43 Neil: Well done Pete, very proud of you

These two childhood friends' affectionate oscillation between support and rivalry shows how 'similarities' between students' and professional texts can be used both for and against them. Whilst the notion that Peter's film has any relation to his personal experience is clearly treated as a joke (34), Neil's initial reference to *Friday the 13th* is received by Peter as a reproach (11). Like Carly, Peter claims that he 'just made it up' (35), drawing on the (literary) notion of the unique wellspring of 'imagination'. In order to do so he poses as 'innocent' of the text of *Friday the 13th* (15), although the subsequent discussion shows that he is familiar with it (30, 39). He becomes more confident once I give him 'permission' to 'echo' other films (24-5, 38-41), but it is their status as 'successful' that legitimates his association with them. It is a question of good market sense, as Steve also argued: 'many of the best and most frightening horror films use this formula and they are successful, so why change?'. Yet this still does not provide a place from which they can perceive any creativity in what they do.

While some students obligingly told me how useful the course had been, in some cases their investment in a self-reliant persona extended to denying any need for others. I asked Steve, Russell and Kevin whether Kate's input had 'made a difference' or had 'helped' them. Kevin and Steve both said not, and Steve turned to address Russell: 'You did though didn't you, you got help with learning the computer'. Russell hotly rejected the potential vulnerability this seemed to imply: 'No! (...) She, er, suggested the same things that I thought but in a different way'. Requiring guidance in this context seemed to be interpreted as lacking the autonomy and independence proper to students in general and perhaps men in particular.

'Textual analysis' of their images often fell awkwardly between description and a wish-fulfilling instruction in how they should be read. For instance, Stephen writes of his video cover: 'The size of the figure compared to the house *is* disproportionate. The overlarge image of the man and his placing right at the front of the cover *is very threatening. It is obvious* that he is the focal point of the story rather than the house... The house, made of granite and set without any background vegetation *suggests isolation'* (my emphasis). His imperious

language demands agreement, but barely considers the possibility of divergent readings.

Figure 9: Stephen's video cover, 'Surgery'

Students saw the commentary as inviting them to elaborate on their intention and agency – to say what they meant about what they meant to say, as if they could make just what they liked occur. Michael captured the confusion this caused, suggesting that it was to 'show we knew what we was doing, to make it look like we meant every shot, and every aspect of it, and say what we did and why we did it, because the teachers might not know what we were thinking of at the time'. He acknowledges that his intention may be opaque both to him and to others. Ian, more baldly, stated that 'I think the commentary, most people's, most of mine was just a pure lie, it was saying oh yeah I planned this shot, wrote the storyboard, when half the time I didn't know what I was doing. I just, like, I got the camera, and I just thought of it the day I was doing it'.

Moreover, these accounts did not do justice to the haphazard yet creative way in which students fashioned their work. As the brief extracts from Carly and Peter show, they combined elements from other narratives – drowned killers, monsters

who appear in their victims' sleep - into something different. They drew from associated media forms, particularly heavy metal – for instance, Alex took both his title and his soundtrack from *Electric Funeral* by Black Sabbath for a story about an electrocuted murderer's resurrection. Ideas percolated around the classroom - hence the marked preference from students in Alex's friendship group for such serial-killer-come-back-from-the-dead narratives reflected their alliances with each other rather than their adherence to abstract theories of genre. Even specific images and devices were appropriated: Steve borrowed a photo Mehrin had taken and manipulated it on the computer so that it formed a background for the whole of his video cover. Other students admired it, and adopted the same technique rather than using coloured paper. Their 'cognitive style', like Lauren's, more closely approximated Turkle's account of 'bricolage' or 'tinkering' (Turkle 1997). That is, they acted on their 'feelings' rather than what they consciously knew. They used material around them to develop and assimilate ideas, manipulating it from the inside rather than the outside, arranging and re-arranging it, often in a playful, exploratory way.

Audiences: (Don't) tell my mum

The other major concept Kate taught was 'audience', but my observations bore out the reservations raised in earlier chapters about audience 'readings' and 'pleasures'. In addition to the discussions considered in Chapter Five, Kate screened a documentary on horror, which included some interviews with fans, and invited students to comment and to compare to their own experience. However, merely posing the question of whether men and women 'view differently' invites an affirmative answer that is neither related to other categories of identity, such as age, class, race, sexuality, nor seen as structured by specific contexts (home, cinema, etc). Most significantly, it implies that gender is the source rather than the effect of practices of spectatorship. In the class, discussions tended to move from very limited evidence to broad claims that revealed more about normative models of gender than 'real' viewing practices – Mehrin suggested, for instance, that women always 'cuddled up' together to watch horror videos. The voices most frequently heard were those who were prepared to adopt conventionally gendered poses, such as Helen, discussed in Chapter Three, who took up Kate's term by proposing that men watched horror

because they were 'misogynists'. Those whose practices did not match up to expectations, such as Lauren, kept quiet. The abstract nature of 'the audience' as a concept actively prevented reflection on gendered experience. However, since media critics have themselves been accused of similarly essentialist approaches (see Probyn's (1993) analysis of Fiske's work (Fiske 1987)), the problem cannot be said to lie with Kate alone.

Kate also set a task in which students devised a short questionnaire on horror, gave it to ten people and presented their findings to the rest of the class. Since such 'audience research' has frequently been constructed as a means to raise methodological issues – a point I return to in the next chapter – she then challenged how far the data could be seen as reliable and valid. However, her questions met with little response, perhaps because they seemed to undermine the pleasure students had taken in compiling them. Kevin, Russell, David, Steve and Alex, for instance, questioned some fifty commuters outside a local underground station. It appeared that they were more interested in the process, in which they could emulate professional practice, than adopting the academic persona of one who 'interprets' the product. If they referred to the research task in their commentaries, they did so mainly in terms of a service-orientation in which they depicted themselves as learning to 'give the public what they want'. Alex's comment was relatively typical: 'We then done Horror Surveys on the street to find out what people thought about Horror. This also gave us ideas of what most of the audiences liked about horror and what I could do to meet their satisfaction'.

It is also argued that the encounter with a 'real' audience will promote self-evaluation, a position I would strongly support for reasons I explain in the next chapter. At this stage, the possibility was raised but not developed. Kate screened the finished videos to the class and invited comments – but, positioned as judges and bound by ties of friendship and fear (since they knew they would be next), they were either silent or polite ('nice special effects'). Kate also asked whether they had sought feedback from others. Neil mentioned that he had shown his work to his mum and dad. 'What did they say?' asked Kate eagerly. 'Uhh / well, "oh that looks good"', he replied. Parents, constrained to respond as parents do, hardly constitute a 'real audience'.

After the module was complete, Kate used students' video covers as a starting point for the 'effects debate'. She handed them out to groups and asked them to identify 'Who (if anyone) might object to these films and why?', and how they might be censored by different institutions and audiences. The list of 'objectors' eventually included all the usual suspects (parents, elderly people, Christians...), but the students found the questions confusing and difficult to answer and discussion was stilted. Whilst I will argue that it is important to encourage students to take a position outside their own texts, the one offered here was alien and moralistic. In order for the exercise to work, Kate had to reduce the texts to one meaning or content ('there's a lot of violence in these films...'). Since students' work rarely delivered on this, it was not very amenable to this kind of analysis. 'How **can** you object to it?' wondered Alex impatiently, 'there's no blood on the cover!'. Further, 'violence' was made to signify negatively, when it frequently held positive qualities for many students – 'I like violent films' was a common response to my questions about favourite genres.

In sum, the concept of audience failed to deliver any sense of specificity. However, as such, it may serve a purpose in allowing teachers to raise moral-ideological questions that have been otherwise repressed. For instance, Jason produced a scenario about an 'occult investigator' Paul Drew, who meets up with a woman police officer on the trail of a satanic cult. Its activities were described as follows:

> When the ceremony started Drew turned on his video camera to catch all of the action, but what he and the officer witnessed turned their stomachs upside down, he could feel the bile rising as he watched, A young girl was systematically being raped by various cult members, she was crying and they guessed that she had been snatched, in her complete nakedness he saw her vulnerability. Then the cult members were quiet and a figure was appearing out of the shadows, the figure being about 6 foot 8. He watched the figure draw a knife. Drew with horror realised that this figure was faceless, but still unnervingly gruesome.
>
> The girl who was being raped was now erotically being played with the knife. The figure opened the girls stomach up with the knife, the (?) - edged with incredibly sharpened teeth open her open like a skilled butcher. Blood poured from the girl and the cult leader bit her main organs, the other members just eating the girl.

I was initially disturbed at the way the scenario dwelt on the details of the gang rape and murder, and demanded of Kate that she talk to Jason about it during a

lesson. She began by saying non-judgementally 'there's a good idea there', and went on to question its audience: 'I'm not quite sure who it's for – there's a lot of violence and gang rape'. He defended himself by saying that it wouldn't be actually shown in the film, so she then asked him whether it would be 'mainstream' or 'independent'. He chose the former, so she quizzed him about how women audiences would react to it – 'here women lose out all round'. He looked a bit crestfallen, since he seemed to be aware that she didn't like it, but not why (and had he chosen 'independent', Kate's arguments would have been harder to sustain). I doubt that his description of his film as 'mainstream' indicated a developed understanding of the workings of media institutions. He may instead have wanted to associate himself with its broader connotations - popular, successful, deserving of large sums of money, and so on – and taken personally the suggestion that he would have little to offer women. (In his final version, he eliminated the policewoman, perhaps less in order to assuage a female audience than to enact symbolically a revenge fantasy on Kate herself). After she moved on to help other students, I stayed to talk to him. He made some negative comments about finding Sociology easier than Media Studies. 'I can do anything that's written, but not anything I have to use my head for', he said rather obscurely, referring to his lack of confidence with technical equipment. Our conversation strayed to his interest in occult novels by authors such as Shaun Hutson and Dean Koontz, whom he read in great quantities and at enormous speed during his part-time job as a night watchman on a building site. 'But don't tell my mum', he added, explaining that she disapproved of his reading preferences.

Once I had read some of the texts Jason mentioned, I saw that his scenario was in fact a credible attempt to emulate their style. For instance, compare this extract from *Relics* (Hutson 1987: 262)

> Wallace felt as if he was frozen to the ground, unable to move as he watched the creature lift Perry with one scabrous hand, dangling him as a child would dangle a puppet. Then he saw the bloodied hand dart forward towards the man's stomach. The nails pierced the flesh effortlessly and the leathery fingers closed around the archaeologist's intestines, pulling hard. Thick gouts of blood burst from the rent, followed by several sticky, bloated lengths of entrail which the abomination held before it like dripping trophies. Wallace could see that the innards were still pulsing like heavy veins. Blood sprayed everywhere, some of it splattering the policeman, who felt his stomach contract.

The fact that Jason is 'citing' words once again undermines any certainty about what his intentions might be. In any case, his first scenario was not straightforwardly misogynistic. Drew proves somewhat less heroic than his female counterpart, who on seeing the girl's torture 'sprang from the watching place' in an ultimately unsuccessful rescue attempt. The 'hero' only reluctantly follows her and meets a sorry end himself when 'fifty enraged cult members beat them to near unconsciousness and ate them while still alive. The last thing Drew could remember was his eyes being plucked out and darkness enveloping him'. Had Jason more confidence, he might have been able to explain these resemblances and differences to Kate – and indeed, to point out that these novels have a considerable female readership. In order to respond effectively (or at least, without pointless savagery) to students such as Jason, teachers surely need to have some understanding of what are relevant frames of reference for him. However, the reading and viewing necessary to know this in advance is potentially limitless. The issue is thus how to create a situation in which Jason is both able and willing to tell his teachers what he knows, and then to consider what kind of reflection on it we might wish to promote.

Stage two: repositioning students

In the second phase of the case study, we attempted to approach genre in a way that would allow students to reflect on how they used their existing knowledge in order to make sense of a particular text and how genre expectations are mobilised and confounded in the viewing process. For instance we showed a clip from *Friday the 13th*, which introduces a character called 'Annie'. Much as in *Psycho*, the narrative contains several 'red herrings' that imply she may be a major protagonist, yet kills her off some twenty minutes into the film. Horror aficionados would be more likely than less seasoned audiences to perceive the clues that indicate her probable fate (such as her trust in strangers, sickly devotion to children and misplaced optimism about her future). The sequence performs many familiar horror scenes, such as one where Annie (like Harker) enters a bar in a village to ask the way to Camp Crystal Lake (Dracula's castle) and the locals all fall silent. Kate paused the video frequently, asking at each point what they thought she was like, what would happen to her, and crucially,

'how they knew'. The exercise demonstrated students' ability to draw conclusions from fleeting moments conveyed by a wide range of techniques (shot angles, distance, diegetic and nondiegetic information) and to connect to broad textual knowledge – 'they always have characters like that...'. Kate summarised with a handout that emphasised the pleasures of participation allowed by 'predictable' genre films (from Britton 1986: 2).

In their writing, whilst many students still discussed what was 'innovative', they seemed more confident that similarities to existing films would be welcomed by audiences and assessors. Nikkie wrote that: 'it is important to use horror conventions as this is what horror is all about, shooting somebody isn't scary, setting the plot in broad daylight isn't scary...'. As she suggests, departing from some key conventions could no longer be self-servingly justified as 'original'. In some cases, they compared their own texts to those watched in class: 'the opening of *Scream* is very much like my film in that the doorbell rings, the girl makes a dash for the stairs and ends up being butchered to death' (Nikkie). Some openly discussed their sources of inspiration using expressions like 'I got my ideas from...', followed by a list of titles. Often, this enabled me to understand textual references that would have otherwise been obscure: Kathryn, for instance, related that her scenario was a reworking of both *The X-Files* and a 1960s series called *Sapphire and Steel*. Requesting just such specific attributions would not only help teachers to develop a sense of what texts mean to students, but could be the starting point for students to explore their accountability in repeating them, as Butler argues, a point to which I will return.

We began the horror unit with the same task I described in Chapter Four, where we asked students to list horror films they had seen or heard of and to reflect on which were memorable. Kate expanded it to thinking about contexts of viewing, modes of regulation and sources of information about horror (as Moss advocates 1993). Much of the lesson was taken up with the reconstruction of collective memories – whistling theme tunes, reminding each other of unforgettable scenes and in some cases, past viewing experiences they had shared together. As before, students also took it as an opportunity to construct stories about themselves as viewers. Perhaps because they were less invested in academic

identities than Geoff's students, these tended to revolve around absurd reactions, with a certain amount of vying for whose was the funniest:

> Toni: I remember I was watching *Friday the 13th* and you know he's got that mask with the one eye showing, well my dad came in with tissue all round his head and that made it worse, I couldn't sleep all night!
> Louise: No, you know *Poltergeist* when she goes up and she puts her arm out to the telly and she gets her arm sucked in, well after that I couldn't turn the video off, I thought it was going to suck me in!

... And so on. Louise left the room at the end declaring 'Miss, that was a much better lesson today!' – contrasting it to the previous fortnight's induction into key concepts of film analysis - 'Cause we were talking about our ideas and discussing them'. Whilst the lesson generated much talk and laughter, I was left unsure about its intellectual or analytic value. As I will explore in relation to Richard, my reaction may have derived from the general dismissal of 'narrative' knowledge within schools. I had 'forgotten' that qualitative research such as Buckingham's (1996) has argued that such story-telling has a crucial function in learning the genre and ways of coping, so I failed to ask how it could be put to work.

We also asked students to conduct some research in their local video shops, by looking at the films shelved under the horror label and interviewing workers or managers there about horror's popularity and audience. The intention was to question the institutional 'politics' of genre definitions, such as the categorisation of some 'horror' films as thriller or drama in order to attract a wider audience and higher critical status. However, the results provided broader insights into the social construction of the horror audience and the discourses that surround it. For instance, several students noted that horror videos were displayed close to the soft porn, associating two low status forms and making clear assumptions about the target audience. In many cases they were placed on higher shelves, as if to prevent children seeing them, which led to a discussion of tactics by which official regulatory strategies were circumvented by children, store workers and even by parents who would lie about their children's birthdates. It delivered some 'surprises' – Marc reported that women aged 18-25 were the most frequent renters of horror videos (particularly *Scream*). Kathryn recounted a story told by one manager about a group of young boys who would regularly 'hang out' in the horror section of the shop after school, comparing notes on which films

they had watched. Since they clearly could not rent them out, it conveyed how talk about horror might be used in identity formation. Something of the structuring context of horror consumption emerged from these local investigations that was absent in more abstract discussions.

The fundamental change to the course, however, was less its content than its structure. The practical work was commenced in the first week of the horror unit and students were invited to share work in progress throughout the term, to provide motivation and encourage them to see it as a collective rather than purely individual endeavour. In addition, we wanted to promote sustained critical reflection on their production as it took shape, by making the boundaries between interpretation and theorising about professional texts and their own more permeable. As a consequence, however, the requirement for our 'theory' to connect to their 'practice' was much greater – and its failure to do so much more evident. Conscious of this, I redoubled my efforts to provide Kate with additional material that I thought the students 'needed'. On one occasion, she was showing a series of edited clips on women in horror, that I had decided students 'must' see and discuss if they were to reflect adequately on their own gender representations, while I was interviewing two students in the editing suite. They complained vociferously about the difficulty of commentary-writing. Louise's remark that 'she should be telling us how to do it, not showing us those films' highlighted the inadequacies of my approach. I will now offer a close analysis of one student's work, tracing the process of production from the start to the initial evaluation and considering at each point how we responded to it as teachers. I aim to explore what we can learn from it about the value and embedded assumptions of various media education strategies and to provide a basis for the argument about 'ways of knowing' that I develop in the next chapter.

Woolly Gloves

We set students the task of writing the scenario for their film at the outset (and despite having seen no extracts in class beforehand, this posed no difficulties for them). They were then asked to read them out to others for feedback and advice. Richard's scenario, *18 with a Bullet*, was as follows:

A group of teenagers want to celebrate their friend Judy Richard's 18th birthday by renting out a cottage in the middle of the woods.
So they go down to see park ranger Al Sunshine to hire out the cottage. Al who appears to be a kind Christian man gives them the go ahead, but what they don't know is that Sunshine is a psychopathic killer who loves seeing peoples (crossed out: heads explode when getting shot with a sawn-off shot gun) die.
In the time leading up to the party Al Sunshine stalks Judy and her friends. He keeps bumping into them trying to be their friend, so they won't suspect him on the night.
So on the night of the party they're all having a good time, then Sunshine turns up and invites himself to the party, and when they ask him to leave he gets pissed off and goes. Thirty minutes later he comes back and sets the thatched roof on fire, everyone freaks, runs into the woods and they get separated. Then Al Sunshine works his magic. Armed with a camcorder and a gun he sets off after them. One by one he finds them and shoots them in the heart and records the life draining from their bodies. Before long he has only the birthday girl and her friend Marmaduke left who ran off into a cave. Sunshine catches up with them and goes into the cave, when they see Al they go up to him to apologise for burning down his cottage, not knowing that Sunshine burnt down the cottage and killed all their friends, and before Marmaduke knows it he's shot in the head, but the gunshot then wakes up a big brown bear. Just as he is about to shoot Judy this big brown bear jumps out and starts eating Al Sunshine's face, Judy runs away to get help.

Kate responded by asking him 'why' Sunshine was like that; 'has something in his past led him to kill teenagers?' To this Richard replied 'He's mad! And he just likes seeing people die, it kind of turns him on'. Charlie added supportively 'he's just a sad lonely man'. 'Is that enough, though?' wondered Kate, recommending that Richard flesh out his character, by showing him 'in his little cabin in the forest'. She also criticised the ending: 'It's all a bit fateful, it's just lucky that the bear comes along to save them, they don't have much of a time fighting Sunshine or get to know him'. I shared her reservations and when I compiled a tape of opening sequences of films, Kate and I joked about how we had included *Peeping Tom* (1960) 'especially for you, Richard'. He looked both mystified and unconvinced by our comments. Clearly, our frames of reference were very different to his. In relation to Al Sunshine, we demanded 'motivation' and 'depth psychology', and linked his use of the camera to Mark's in *Peeping Tom*. For the teenage characters, we expected a 'moral', such that Judy, for example, might learn something through fighting Sunshine, and disliked how Richard deflated it through the *deus ex machina* device of the big brown bear. Here, we drew perhaps on the notion of horror as a rite of passage for adolescents, showing

them the qualities they need to survive adulthood, which is one possible reading even of Clover's work.

Richard's scenario demonstrates a confident grasp of many horror conventions, yet it was informed by a popular aesthetic that our own understandings led us to overlook. It has elements of the fairytale - young people lost in a big dark wood, at the mercy of the ogres that lurk there. These in turn have been the substance of many slasher movies, in which a psychopath preys upon characters on the cusp of adulthood - as is Judy - in an isolated setting. Unlike typical slasher victims, the teenagers seemingly do not drink, take drugs or have sex and even try to apologise to Al Sunshine for the destruction of his cottage (20-1). By any measure these are 'good kids' who do not deserve what happens to them (with the exception of Marmaduke, who would seem to merit his fate by having a ridiculous name). Although Richard does not supply a psychological cause for Sunshine's violence, he does give it an initiating event in the narrative when he is offended at being asked to leave the party (12-3). Here, he shows a subtle understanding of the dynamics of violence, which is rarely represented as bursting into the world in a completely unmotivated way, as Dika has observed (1987). Like Lauren's, the scenario plays upon (audience) knowledge and (characters') ignorance, appearance and reality. The killer seems to be a 'kind Christian man' (4) and the group's friend (9), but is a monstrous pervert with evil intentions; he has a name - Sunshine - at odds with his true 'dark' nature.

The central point of interest would appear to be Sunshine and the presentation of a string of murders, with variations. The presence of the camcorder highlights the importance attached to the spectacle of the deaths of the victims and the bear may serve partly as a convenient device to bring this serial narrative to a halt. The aesthetic is thus closer to that of the splatter movie, in which 'mutilation is indeed the message - many times the only one' (McCarty 1984). McCarty relates the subgenre to the *grand guignol* tradition of the nineteenth century, in which, as here, plots were derivative or non-existent since 'gore, not drama, was the thing' and the aim was to astonish with effects, not cultural uplift. Like Freddy Kruger, Sunshine is an anti-hero - he 'works his magic', the scenario states (15), leaving us in no doubt that there are positive qualities in the murder and mayhem he carries out. However, his death is ridiculous rather than tragic, and given that

it is his face (his eyes?) that gets eaten first by the bear, the ending punishes his – and perhaps our? - pleasure in looking. This may be a reflexive comment on the psychology of the production and consumption of horror films, rather than of individual characters, and of course, a psychoanalytic explanation might well treat it in terms of castration anxieties. However, it is important to remember the local context and audience for which Richard was writing. The scenario was produced to raise a laugh amongst his friends – as indeed Marmaduke's name and the bear duly provoked much hilarity. The ending therefore gained its meanings from its ability to overturn expectations in the process of reading the story out, rather than addressing an abstract audience with an overall conceptualisation of the genre. My analysis thus far also ignores the title, *18 with a Bullet*, which should have given me some clues as to Richard's interests.

Despite Richard's implicit generic knowledge, in interview he claimed not to be a horror fan. However, he did have a passion of his own. He cited gangster films as his favourite genre and described various subterfuges he employed to hide his video of *Pulp Fiction* from his disapproving father. Here, he is talking about the gangster film *Goodfellas*:

Sara: so what do you like about it?
Richard: I like, well, to be honest, seeing them beating people up // I love it, I like seeing this big mob, of Italians, gangsters, gathering round this bloke and giving him a kicking
Sara: really? (Charlie laughs)
Richard: there's nothing wrong with that! (laughs)
Sara: and what is it that you like about that
Richard: dunno, I just / enjoy watching it
Sara: mmm / and can you say any more about what's good about it?
Richard: mmmm // what's good about it //
Marc: do you enjoy it because of the pain that the person is getting or cause of the enjoyment the people are giving like that - the people that are beating him up, is it their enjoyment, is that why you like it?
Richard: yes
Marc: and when you watch it, umm, is it sort of like your fantasy, you'd like to be them, kicking that person up, you know, beating them up
Richard: no, it doesn't make me wanna go out and give people a kicking, it's just, watching it, I enjoy watching it
Marc: you just enjoy the fantasy

Richard can say what he loves - male-on-male violence (2-4) - but not why, although he can specify that it has no relation to how he wants to behave in real life (17). Marc steps in to help him – and me - out, offering two possible subject

positions to Richard: the masochist who relishes the pain of the beaten, or the sadistic pleasures of the beaters (11-3, 15-6). Richard cannot quite opt for either, since he agrees with both (14). Indeed, theories of fantasy mentioned in Chapter Two would suggest that the value of fictional representations is precisely that audiences do not have to take sides, but can identify fluidly with the scene as a whole – with 'just watching it' (8, 18).

The storyboard and video sequence Richard subsequently produced seemed to revel in the punishment of the (male) body. The former portrayed in a cartoon style similar to that of comics such as *Viz* various tortures being inflicted on a victim. For instance, one frame showed him being punched so hard his teeth flew out, another him being thrown in a swimming pool with his feet set into a concrete block. The video itself began with two male characters sitting around a campfire in front of a 'tent'. The killer lurks in the bushes, stalks one of them from behind and wrestles him to the ground. The victim is then bundled into a car and taken off to a shed or garage where we see the killer slitting his throat. It had no women characters and no camcorder, although Sunshine smiles and tips his hat to the camera in a way that indicates an awareness of the audience. The shed evoked the warehouse setting of *Reservoir Dogs*, and the disco soundtrack *Jungle Boogie* by Kool and the Gang linked the sequence to *Pulp Fiction*, which also uses it. The title, *18 with a Bullet*, derives from the Pete Wingfield track included by Tarantino. Whilst the images are less complex in their construction than Lauren's, they communicate the narrative clearly and with verve. Many student videos depicted scenes of male fighting, but tended to use ineffective, obscure long shots. Richard uses a range of shot distances, such as a close up of the feet of the killer, of the killer's hands pulling on a pair of (woolly) gloves, or the flashing blade of the knife held aloft. Again, these all are meaningful through their familiarity rather than originality.

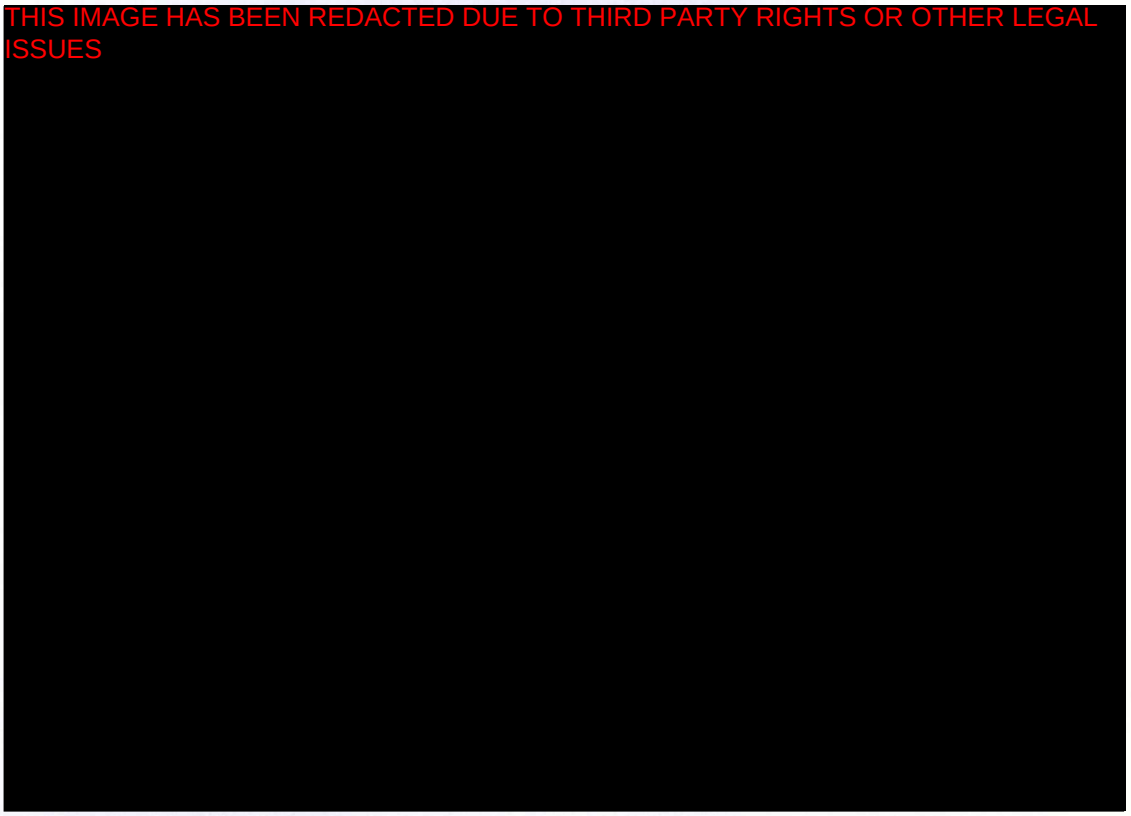

Figure 10: Woolly Gloves

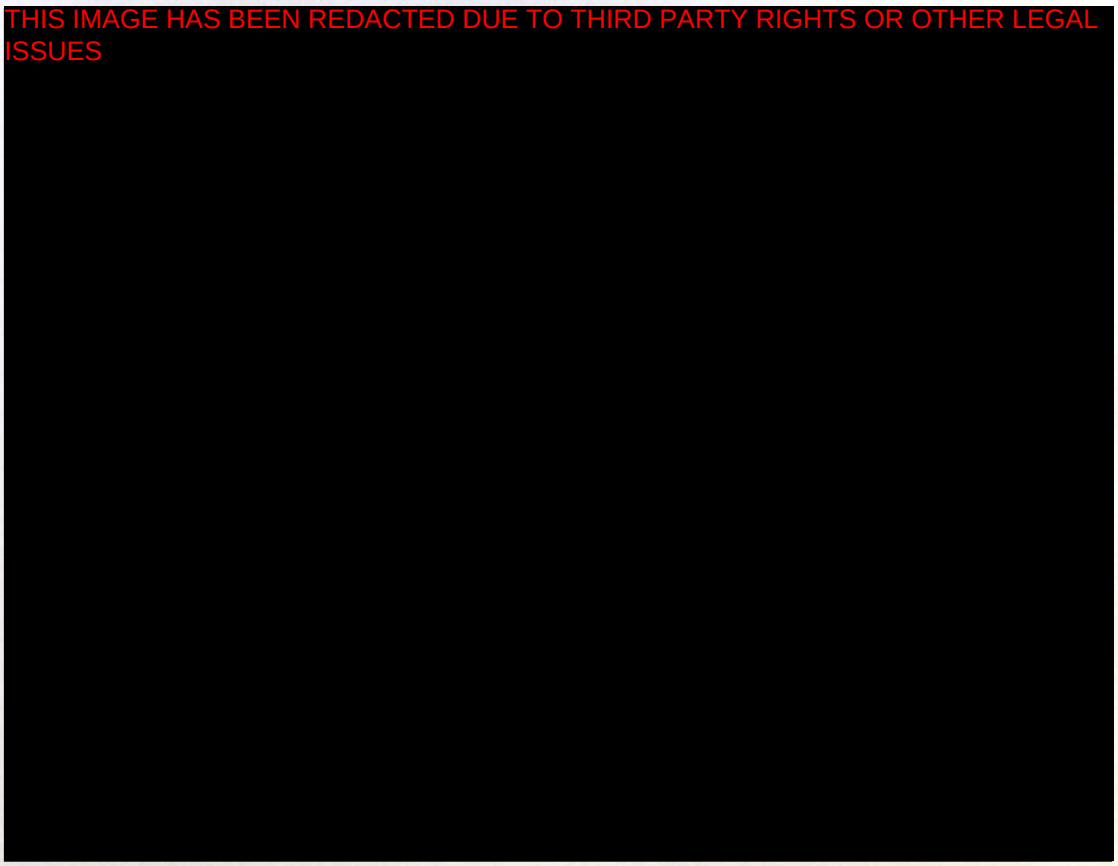

Figure 11: Victim taken

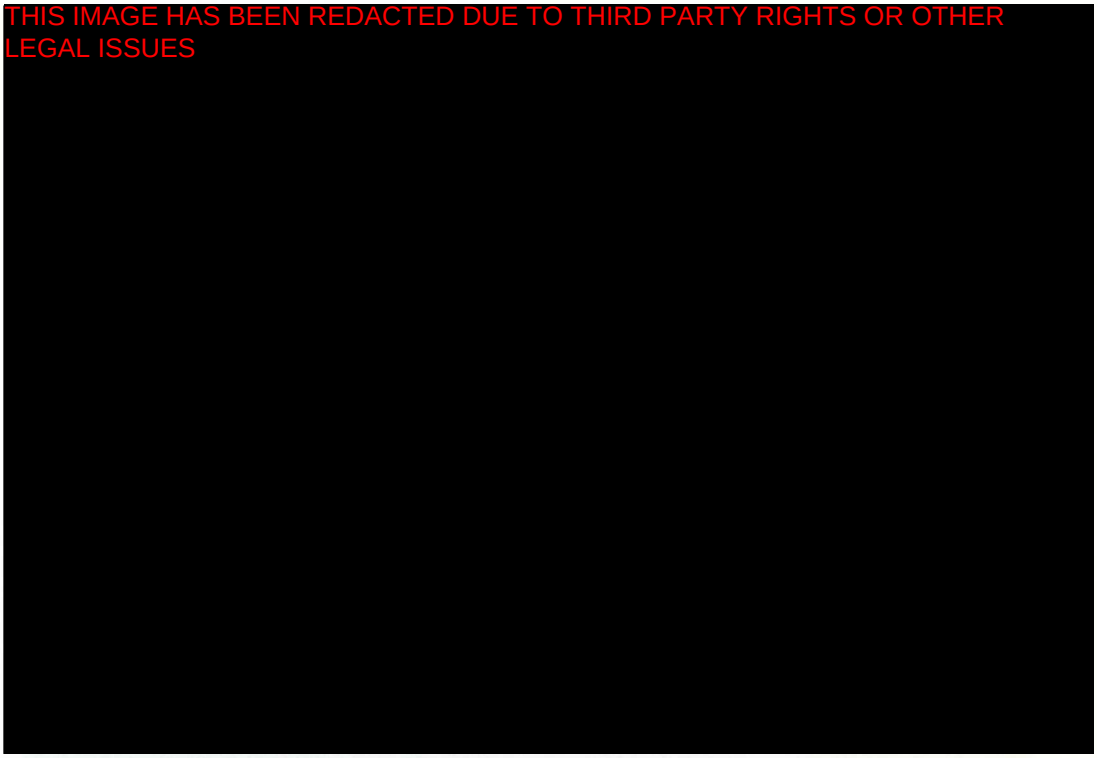

Figure 12: Victim in car

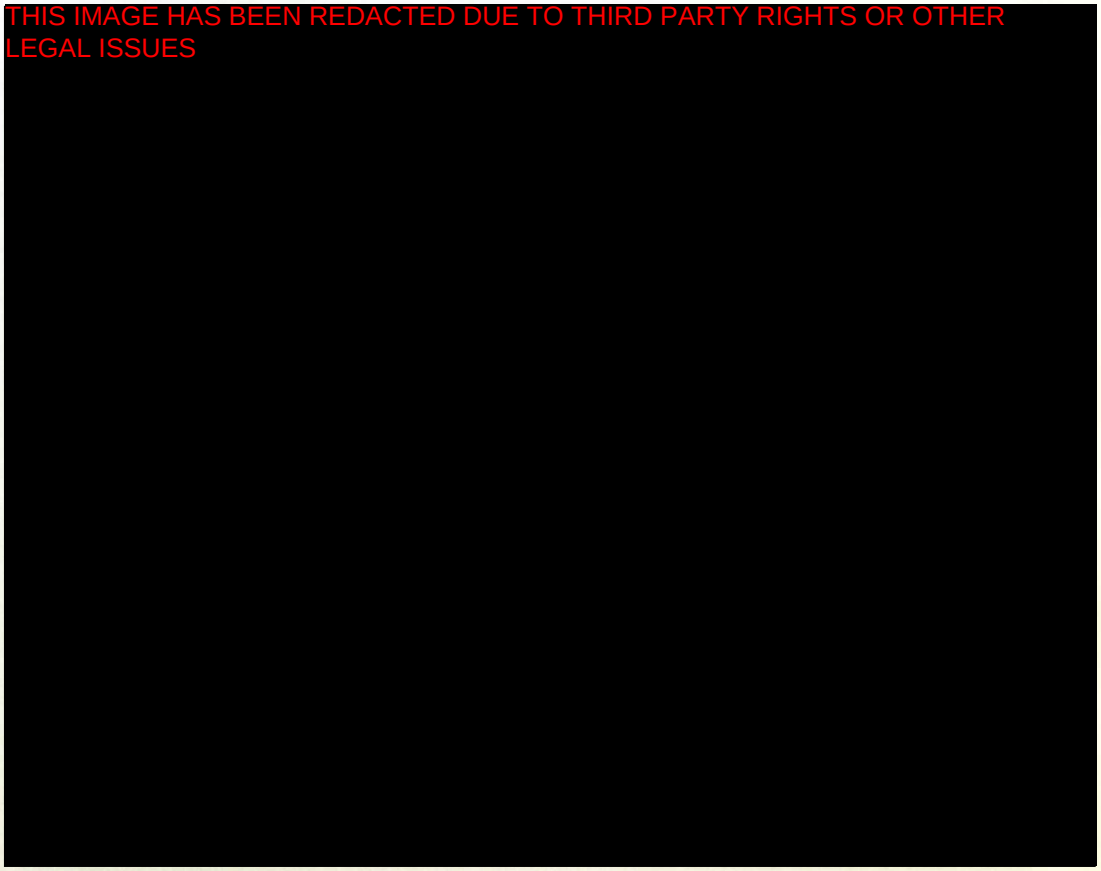

Figure 13: Al Sunshine's magic

Figure 14: Throat slitting before…

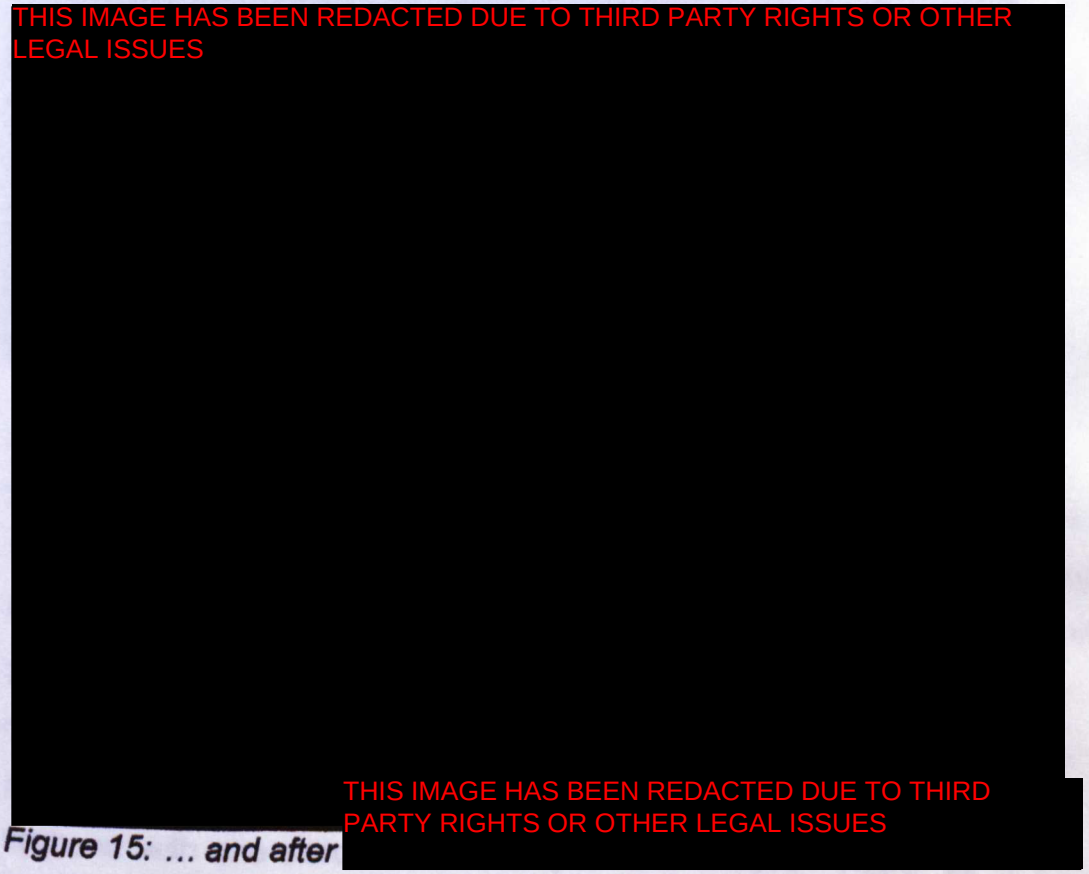

Figure 15: … and after

Critics who draw on psychoanalytic perspectives generally stress the repressed homoeroticism involved in the spectacle of male suffering, often further displaced by being enacted on bodies that are ethnically marked as 'other' to an assumed white audience (e.g. Tasker 1993). (Richard specifies the pleasures of witnessing 'Italians' kicking another, above, 3). Some aspects of the video sequence might support such readings. One is a shot of the victim stuck halfway through a very small window, posed rather provocatively with his head invisible and his bottom in the air, making him literally the butt of the laughter that the image invariably aroused in others.

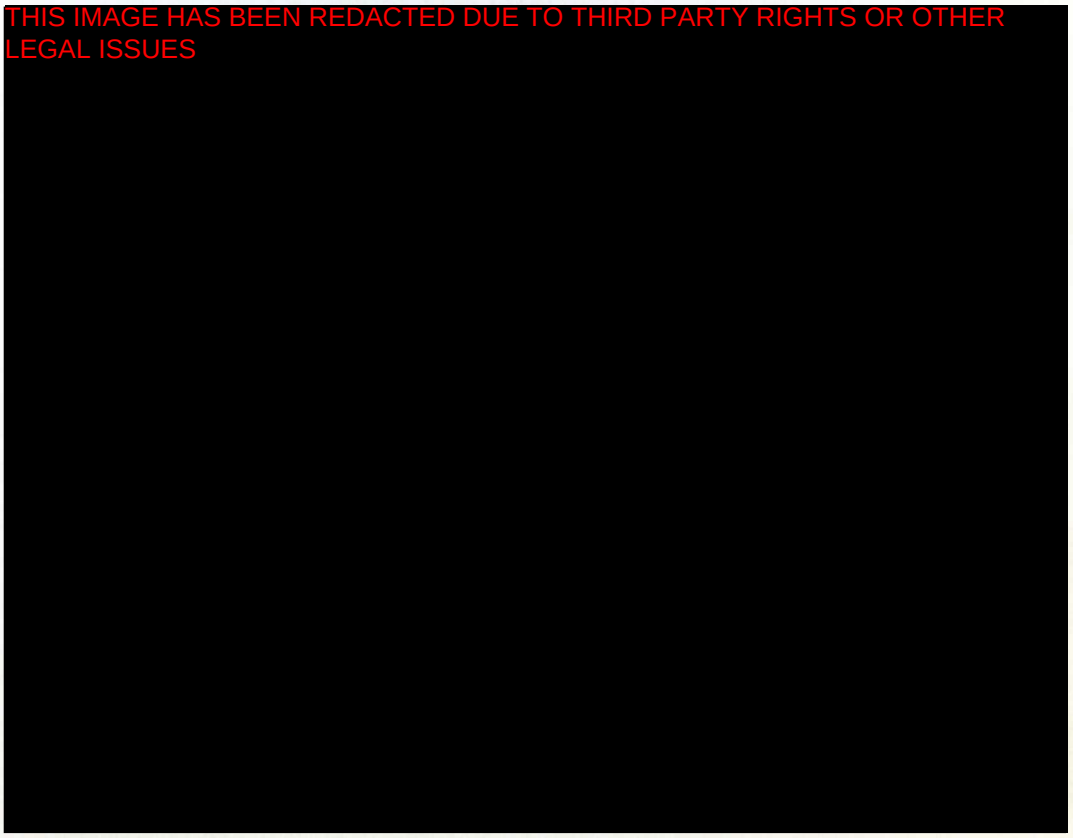

Figure 16: Bottom

Secondly, although the actors here are white, the soundtrack's connection to Tarantino's films might recall his own use of black characters, for instance in the *Pulp Fiction* rape scene. I also wonder whether its dominant refrain, 'get down, get down', may have appealed to Richard's interest in *going* rather than *getting* down. Richard was not unwilling to consider the relevance of these interpretations when I put them to him in a later interview[3], but was only able to respond with one-word answers of 'yes' and 'maybe'. There, as in the extract above, Marc took charge of the situation and proved better able than I to press

[3] To be precise, I asked him whether, for instance, male violence was 'another way' of being close to men...

Richard to expand on his interest in violence. As a young gay man in the process of coming out, Marc was perhaps motivated to reflect on his and other men's relationship to images of masculinity. So the problem with psychoanalytic criticism is not, as Barker and Brooks imply, its 'insidious' accusations about what goes on behind the backs of audiences (see Chapter Two). It may have been useful for Marc as a discourse to make new ways of thinking and speaking about himself possible, but will not necessarily be for Richard if he wants to maintain an identity as heterosexual.

Overall, the value of the production work as a learning opportunity for Richard is much less clear than for Lauren. She, I argued, took it seriously in order to articulate and connect contradictory views on gender. Richard would appear to have used it to enact his fantasies, in a way that is all the more difficult to challenge because they are screened by humour. In these cases, it would seem important to use writing to enable students to reflect on what they did. I will now move on to consider Richard's evaluation.

Melack and the Million Dollar Dream

We asked students to complete drafts of the commentary three weeks before the final deadline for completion, so that they could rewrite them and see repeated reflection as part of the process rather than as an obligatory extra added to the end of the course. Kate instructed them to discuss 'horror as a genre', what conventions they had used, how audiences might interpret their work, and to analyse ('deconstruct') their images 'in depth'. Richard's first draft was as follows, with Kate's comments in bold italics.

Introduction
For our media project, we had to make up a Horror scenario, and created the opening sequence using a digital camera, we took so-many pictures and put them on to a video, which lasted around a minute, with some music over it.
Most Horror films involve serial killers, monsters, aliens or the living dead. I decided to go for a park ranger, who likes nothing better than shooting someone or knifing them and recording the life draining from their bodies. ***You could distinguish between early and 'modern' horror (post-1960s).***
So we had to make a scenario, and say basically what happens in your ***the*** film. ***Describe the plot***
In mine, there is a park ranger called Al Sunshine, who kills people and records their dying on camera. ***in what other films does this occur*** A group of

teenagers decide to rent out a cottage in the middle of Al's park to celebrate a friends birthday, after getting permission from Al Sunshine. Al stalks some of the female teenagers going to the party, and tries to become their friend. So come the night of the party he sets the roof on fire, leaving the people inside no choice but to run into the dark woods. One by one he hunts them down, shoots them in the heart and records them dying. He gets down to only two remaining who ran off into a cave, one of them was the birthday girl and the other was her friend Marmaduke, who gets shot in the face when Al catches up with them. So Just as Al is about to clear up by killing the one remaining teenager, a big brown bear jumps Al and starts eating his face, and the teenager runs off to safety. ***DON'T REWRITE THE SCENARIO***

After making our scenarios, We had to create and opening sequence, by using a digital camera, taking 10-20 pictures, put them together on a video and put some music over it.

But before that we studied the opening sequences from some popular Horror films like, Friday 13th, Candyman and Halloween.

Then we created our storyboards for the opening sequence. I had planned it well and couldn't see it failing, because I had my friend Matthew Melack's word that he would go fully clothed into a swimming pool and pretend to drown. So I had set a date for my friends to come round my house to take the photos, we got down to business, we took 3 or 4 photos then it wouldn't take any more, because it had used up all the film. (Because Marc's photos were also on it). Things weren't looking good, I was out of film and only had 2 days until it had to be in. Then Marc got the idea of putting the pictures on video, and clearing the film, so I could take more pictures. Quality! Things were sweet. I got most of the photos done on Saturday and had 3 photos to do on Sunday when Melack would go in the pool. So come Sunday I'm getting ready to go and finish it off, then Melack rang up and said that he wouldn't do it, I tried to persuade him to (534 words) jump into a freezing cold swimming pool on a freezing cold day, but he said that his mum wouldn't let him, he then said "do you want to speak with my mum," so instead of having Mrs Melack having a go at me I said "no, worries Melack, just come round mine and I'll slit your throat". So I got it done, it wasn't as good as it should have been but never mind.

Eventually I ended up with Al Sunshine putting a Million-Dollar Dream on Melack, knocking him out, then being bundled into a car, and driven off to a little hut where he eventually gets his throat slit. It was all taped-off with 'Jungle boogie' by Kool and the gang playing over it.

658 words

<u>shit</u>

need to comment on what shots I took (close up, ...) and why!

write about front cover, i.e. why you chose to write in red.

why did you use that particular song.

(line drawn from 'shit') ***Yes!! → Richard you should really spend most of the time <u>deconstructing</u> the final products saying how you've constructed meaning and what you want audiences to make of them.***

- Avoid making it sound as though it just happened with no pre-planning!

Richard seems unsure how to fill up the allotted 1500 words - hence the worried word-counting (40, 40), and the space-filling description, twice, of the practical

task (2-4, 24-6). There is very little reference to classroom work - the fact that students looked at opening sequences of other films is noted (27-8), but they are neither analysed nor related to his own work. Similarly, he makes a sweeping statement about what sort of monsters horror films contain (5), without locating his own choice within subgenres, film history, or explaining why it might have been an appropriate one. In sum, it seems to be exactly what Exam Boards counsel against; a description of 'what went wrong' with no analysis or relation to theory. Kate's final comments (57-60) ask him to play the examiners' game: to deconstruct and not to describe, to present himself as a rational ego fully in control of events, meanings and audience reactions.

When I showed this to others, someone commented disparagingly 'it's just a hapless student story'. It does indeed contain the familiar tropes of such tales - the deadline that is looming and only just met, the obstacles encountered that derail intentions and result in work of lesser quality, etc. I would however challenge the prefix of 'just'. It is quite alarming that a discipline that has put so much effort into analysing the cultural and pedagogic significance of popular narrative genres should then dismiss them when they appear in students' writing.

In contrast to the often tedious and dispiriting experience of reading students' commentaries, Richard's work makes me laugh – and if we seek to reclaim such pleasures for students we should perhaps feel able to do so for ourselves. Like a successful genre film, it performs its set pieces rather well, which suggests that it gives him a place to speak from where he feels confident. The seventh paragraph (29 onwards), where he 'describes' the process, is precisely the point at which it picks up pace. It becomes linguistically more varied and interesting, using the sharp white working class slang of 'Quality!' and the more black or Tarantino-esque 'Things were sweet' (37). The tenses switch from past to present and back again and there is a dramatic use of dialogue (39, 42-4). His informal address – 'So come Sunday' (39) - speaks to friends rather than an examiner or teacher, a like-minded community who know already what a 'Million Dollar Dream' is. He uses irony to tell the story against himself. He introduces himself as a heroic narrator who is well prepared ('I had planned it well', 29-30) and efficient ('we got down to business', 32-3), yet is untrustworthy and lacking insight. Matthew Melack's promise that he 'would go fully clothed into a

swimming pool' (30-1) establishes the pivotal event on which success will depend, yet cues the audience to expect a different resolution from the one the narrator confidently anticipates. The description of the pool and the weather, with the repetition of 'freezing cold' (41), implicitly endorses Melack's refusal to keep it. Richard continues his self-presentation as the resourceful protagonist who pulls it off at the last moment by proposing that he will slit his friend's throat instead (44), and humour derives from the ambivalence of this solution as both real and pretend violence. The conversational tone not only draws us in but also invites us to respond, with our own anecdotes of academic mishaps, or in my case, with questions about how we can learn to value such work.

Richard's self-monitoring comments at the end (52-5) address himself from another place, that of the school that demands what he cannot give (explanations and reasons 'why'); we might therefore wonder why, if he knows his tale is 'shit', it matters enough to him to tell it. The story does provide a recognisable and vivid model of the disjoined, ad hoc way learning happens. It stresses its improvised nature, that it is limited by circumstances, that students have to work with what is possible rather than what they might want, and to rely on others in ways that both help (Marc) and hinder them (Melack). It effectively exposes the conceit of self-knowledge and autonomy. Perhaps also the behind-the-scenes view articulates what is missing in a video that publicly presents a 'vulgar', excessive and extreme violence. Matthew cannot resist Richard's demands on his own, but has to resort to the greater authority of his mother (42), like a schoolchild calling on older siblings in the playground. Richard too fears her power, doesn't want her 'having a go' at him (43). It is relevant here that he refers to Matthew more often by his surname (30, 38, 39, 43, 47) than his first name, as he does Marc, and mis-spells it (it is 'Meilack', as I know because his sister was a student at the time of my first observation). It sounds like *male-lack*, and the omission of the i produces *Me-lack*, in its written form. It may be important to Richard to communicate that, after all, he is not so violent, not so free of dependency and terror, not so able to shape the world just as he pleases. The commentary may therefore be a fitting response to the paranoia that boys' investments in violent media so often provoke.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have referred to the emergent paradigm of media education as an 'everyday life' and 'audience-centred' pedagogy. I have used these broad terms to mean teaching that attempts to connect students' informal cultural interests to the official, academic discourses and knowledges provided by the school. In Chapter Four I argued that the 'liberal pluralist' gesture of introducing more 'relevant' content to the curriculum can indeed contribute to constructive social relations between teachers and students within the classroom. It is worth noting that Lauren's first choice of A-Level had been Psychology, because she hoped it might help her understand 'the mind of a serial killer'. When she found that it did no such thing, she changed to Media Studies, enticed precisely by the promise of studying horror. We should not underestimate the affirmative role our choice of subject matter may play. However, as I also proposed in Chapter Four, my analysis here suggests that it is as important for teachers to consider modes of address in the classroom that enable students to mobilise the resources they have and that give them a 'place to speak from'.

So far, I have tried to challenge the interdiction of students' work on the basis of its ideological content and effects. I built my argument around Lauren's video because it has sufficient technical skill and complexity to make us aware that had we silenced Lauren at the start, we would never have been able to hear what she has to say[4]. Reducing her text to a single meaning (violence or misogyny), circumscribing what she is permitted to say for her own protection and liberation, or providing a cohesive theory intended to induce a 'critical distance', would have risked stopping her learning short in its tracks. In this respect, maybe we can learn something from Lauren's mother, who was cast as the victim. When I look at the images of 'Lily', I am struck by the fact that she fails to look quite scared enough. She gazes, not into the camera lens at an imaginary audience, but past it, at Lauren, with an amused affection at the role she has been asked to perform. Lauren may indeed be telling her mother something of how she feels about her when she stages her death. Her mother agrees to play along, however, because she loves her daughter and supports

[4] Lauren received a relatively high grade for her work – Kate was committed to being non-judgemental about content. However, in the second phase of the research, we both agreed that at the time we had failed fully to recognise its

her struggles to make sense and to make something of herself. As teachers, as adults, we too could try to look with a little less judgement and a little more tenderness and tolerance at the sometimes unfamiliar cultures of children and adolescents.

However, we are left with some key questions about the political status of Lauren's 'resistance'. Is it the product of my reading, or hers? Has Lauren herself heard the difference she makes? Of course, in speaking the language of the media, Lauren will always, necessarily, say more or differently than she thinks or consciously intends. But we do need to consider how teaching might help her to realise or own the knowledge that she has. Commonly, educators argue that written self-evaluation will serve this end. However, I have pointed to its frequent failure to provide insights into learning for either students themselves or for their teachers. Many others have already acknowledged this; Grahame goes so far to state that 'there must be a better way' (1990: 117). However, since I would endorse Buckingham's view that writing is an important means of conversing with oneself about one's learning (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994: 159), I would argue that the problem lies rather with what we ask students to write about, and how.

In relation to Richard's work and the discussions of self-as-horror-viewer, I have proposed that narrative accounts may provide discursive positions that many students feel more comfortable with than a strictly 'academic' one. If they are ruled out immediately, many students may be unable to speak at all. Yet this is precisely what happens under existing assessment criteria. For instance, the NEAB syllabus for 1999 issues a terrifying decree to silence the sound of the self - that an evaluation will be deserving of an 'E' grade where *'elements of subjectivity'* are present. The Cambridge A Syllabus 'E' grade is similarly defined as showing 'minimal ability to evaluate the artefacts produced ... possibly focusing mainly upon a simple account of the process leading to their construction'. An 'N' grade is awarded if 'irrelevant material dominates the commentary'. In 1998 it notes that 'No credit is available for narratives of the process of production and as this is a very common tendency candidates will

technical excellence, which surpassed that of students who received higher grades. It may be that despite conscious intention, her teachers downgraded her work because of its 'violence'.

need to be clearly warned against it'. Yet it then immediately states that 'credit is available for the skill of selecting and presenting relevant information'.

If students so consistently give us stories rather than evaluation, the jocular ('Russell's head') and personal rather than the serious and distanced, they might indeed be trying to tell us something 'relevant' and important. Learning what this might be will involve appreciating the richness of what it means to work from within what Probyn calls the 'felt facticity of material social being' (1993: 21-22). I am not mounting an anti-intellectual argument that we should throw off the constraints of academic discourse in order to return to the more immediate voice of 'experience', however. We should recognise our 'will to truth', the institutionalised power relations and existing 'domains of the speakable' in the classroom when we demand intimate confessions from our students, as I have argued in relation to Pearl in Chapter Four and Lauren here. The fact that Richard's story is generic means that it cannot be said to express his unique truth, and although it admits variations, its implicit rules may sometimes be limiting. As a 'hapless student', Richard mocks himself and does not fully acknowledge what I would see as his actual ingenuity. Like Probyn (1993), I would argue that we should neither dismiss experience nor accept it at face value, but ask how we can use it productively as a basis for epistemological analysis. Finding answers will require us to reconsider what we understand by 'knowing' and to see language and form as something to think *with* rather than 'what students think'.

Chapter Seven - Ways of Knowing in the Classroom: rethinking 'theory and practice'

I will indicate the parameters and purposes of my argument in this chapter by considering briefly the work of a student from the first case study, Louisa. Her scenario *Evil Phenomenon* involved a serial killer who 'stalks the corridors' of a US high school and leaves flowers by the bodies of his 'brutally murdered' victims. A woman FBI agent eventually reveals him to be the school caretaker, who is driven by an obsession with astrology – the flowers correspond to the birthdates of his victims. After a struggle, he is shot. The sequence shows the before and after of two murders (but not the actual events), and crosscuts to images of hands arranging flowers in a vase. Her commentary satisfies examiners' requirements by speaking in a voice that is logical, detached and unambiguous. She locates the production work in the context of the horror course, mentioning the films that students 'studied' and learnt how to 'interpret'. She positions herself as in control of textual elements: 'In order to produce the video cover and storyboard, the typical conventions of horror films needed to be broken down, for example, the relevance of locations, settings, characters, narratives, iconography, themes and semiotics and signs – all major conventions of a horror film'. She confidently discusses symbolism: 'I used flowers as a major theme in my film, flowers can be a representation of innocence in films, for example a representation or a symbol of romance, however they are now frequently used as a symbol of evil, they represent something normally viewed as innocent, turned evil. The theme of innocence turned evil is common amongst today's horror films, one example of this is the 'innocent' child's toy turned evil in the film *Child's Play*.' Her commentary was replete with quotations from handouts the teacher had supplied.

Yet her work contains several anomalies. For instance, before both murders, a shot shows the villain (to be played by Jack Nicholson), who stares straight at the camera with an expression of menace. What was entirely appropriate in Lauren's video (forewarning the audience) or Richard's (celebrating the anti-hero) is less so in a film explicitly marketed as a 'thriller', whose narrative turns around the unveiling of the killer. Secondly, she names Susan Sarandon as the FBI agent and refers to her in the commentary as the 'Final Girl'. As for Pearl et

al in Chapter Four, Sarandon seems to signify 'quality' and 'drama'; her role in *Thelma and Louise* (1991) may also make her an obvious choice when students want to make female violence credible. However, an actress with an established pedigree of mainstream films, in her fifties, is hardly the Final Girl Clover describes, and the FBI agent role makes the film closer to *Silence of the Lambs* than the low-budget slasher Louisa's use of Clover implies. The writing seems only tangentially connected to the product for all its sophistication.

Louisa's work received one of the highest grades in the year, yet Kate expressed a certain disappointment in it. 'She does what she needs to do in order to do well', she commented, 'but it seems like she just doesn't *care* about it'. Whilst there is no reason why Louisa should not compensate for her lack of interest in or knowledge of horror with a commentary that demonstrates her academic skills, what I want to avoid is a situation where those students who – like Richard and Lauren - do 'care', lose out.

Media Education and Cultural Capital

In Bourdieu's sociology, the school as an institution systematically reproduces unequal social relations, particularly those of class (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). At its most overt, the differential tracking of students (by grading, streaming into different subject sets or types of school, for example) regulates access to forms of high status knowledge and educational qualifications. More subtly, it makes differences in taste, cultural preference, knowledge and judgements socially functional by recognising those of the bourgeoisie as more valuable 'cultural capital'. These differences are generated through the habitus - a system of 'durable dispositions' towards culture instilled at conscious and unconscious levels and acquired in the first instance in the family and home environment (Bourdieu 1984: 169-225). Bourdieu suggests that tastes are derived from class experience – working class groups who lack an automatic expectation of material comfort, for example, value the direct, sensual and immediate, whereas economic privilege enables dominant groups to cultivate a distance from need and to favour the abstract and formal. The tastes and competences of the latter are affirmed through their consonance with those favoured by the school, whilst socially subordinate groups are disadvantaged

because theirs are defined as illegitimate and inferior. Class oppression is thus achieved by cultural and symbolic means, not material deprivation alone.

Without endorsing the potential essentialism or determinism of Bourdieu's argument (see Frow 1995), I want to sketch out briefly (and crudely) how media education practices might consolidate particular kinds of cultural capital. Although the history of media education can be written from many perspectives, one strand would locate its evolution within inner city and working class schools in response to the failure of existing curricula to meet the needs of the students there. In this context, demand for greater flexibility as to curriculum content aimed to allow teachers to construct courses relevant and appropriate to their students. However, to the extent that the study of particular works alone accords cultural capital, sharply differentiated curricula raise the spectre of an inequality whereby an elite studies Shakespeare and the rest sitcoms, as Morgan warns (1996; 1998). As I suggested in Chapter One, however, there is little consensus around what constitutes valuable knowledge content in relation to popular media, as opposed to literature. The compromise effectively advocated by *Making Movies Matter* (and adopted by Kate and Geoff) is to include 'high status' subject matter – silent and experimental films or world cinema, and so on – as a supplement to rather than displacement of students' existing tastes, whilst simultaneously providing access to a shared body of conceptual discourse and skills. The latter serves to cultivate a mode of appropriation of texts commonly captured in the term 'critical viewing'. Within the dominant protectionist paradigm, I have argued, 'critical' is a code word for a serious, suspicious, distanced relationship to the mass media; *Beyond Blame* explicitly valorises traditional high culture. It might be taken as legitimating the cultural capital of an 'older' fraction of the middle classes, which rejects consumption and adopts ascetic lifestyles based on abstinence and duty rather than pleasure (Lury 1996: 98-100).

The emergent paradigm, I have argued, intervenes more directly in the social relations of education, by redefining what counts as 'literacy', away from traditional print forms that might favour middle class children. Accrediting students' competence in practical media might – as Kate hoped – make a material difference to their life chances by boosting their level of educational

attainment. But it also encourages a different relationship to media consumption and production, which is more engaged and hedonistic than rejecting. Rather than aiming to instil singular ('academic') identities, it invites students to 'speak' from a plurality of subject positions – as producers, evaluators, researchers and so on. It is collective and social rather than individualist in its conception of learning, especially in its emphasis on the pleasures of participation in group production work. It offers non-traditional experiences within the school and values those acquired outside it, rather than only scholastic canons of knowledge. It converges with the dominant paradigm in encouraging reflective distanciation and envisioning students as moving from 'apprenticeship' to 'mastery' (Buckingham 1990: 221), to greater autonomy and control over thought processes, as if the ultimate goal is less reliance on others. However, this is to be achieved through translation and mobility between different forms and orders of discourse rather than wholesale absorption of the teacher's knowledge. The 'critical' student that would emerge as a result of these practices might be characterised as self-sufficient, self-reflexive and ironic - able to move with ease between texts of different provenance and cultural value (high *and* low, horror *and* African cinema, Madonna *and* feminist film, Gothic *and* gory), levels of meaning and discourse (abstract or academic *and* personal) and language modes (video production *and* formal writing).

Described in this (partial) way, this ideal subject bears an uncanny resemblance to the 'new' middle class consumer, particularly in its ludic or 'gaming' approach that oscillates between detachment and involvement, appetite for new experiences and commitment to pleasure. Lury's summary of social distinctions in consumption style argues that these new middle classes have been created by and contribute to the development of the contemporary capitalist economy (Lury 1996, especially Chapter Four). The shift from Fordist mass production to post-Fordist flexible specialisation that makes a greater range of goods available, requires and enables more diversified and individualised consumption practices and increases the importance of aesthetic knowledge in making lifestyle choices and competing for jobs in the cultural economy. Such an analysis raises the possibility that media education is still a means by which the middle classes (albeit a different fraction) reap economic and cultural profit out of their informal interests. (See also Usher and Edwards 1994: 190).

My approach assumes that schools will inevitably shape students' specific literacies and reflective capacities, and broadly endorses those advocated within the emergent paradigm of media education. However, my discussion of Lauren and Richard's work in the previous chapter gives me pause for thought. Neither quite measures up to the paradigm's projected ideal, for Lauren takes horror too seriously, Richard seems too embedded within the local, specific community he addresses, and neither have stepped outside the popular forms that my account of *Making Movies Matter* showed continue to be despised within the school. To realise better the political commitments of media educators to such students I will argue for some small-scale reforms of current practices.

Understanding 'Understanding'

My proposals involve displacing the epistemological models of both paradigms in order to rethink how teachers encourage students to reflect on their practical work, and how they assess its outcome. The perception of what constitutes 'understanding' and of the relationship between knowing and doing embodied within assessment criteria at A-Level is, I believe, a travesty. For instance, higher-grade practical work is described as demonstrating a 'critical understanding of the relationship between theory and practice' (UCLES) or an 'appreciation of the link between the finished product and the area of study *on which it is based*' (NEAB, my emphasis)[1]. One interpretation of these criteria (encouraged by the dominant paradigm) would be that theory (knowledge of codes and conventions) is that which makes practice possible. 'Understanding' can only be demonstrated in conscious operations that enact a premise laid down in the teaching. Kate's structuring of her course in the first phase of the research, I suggested, drew on this model of production as 'knowledge application'. Despite the rhetoric of valuing students' prior competence, it ultimately respects only that of the teacher. Grading practices may well reward the presence of theoretical discourse in students' evaluations as evidence of intellectual development. A student such as Louisa who handles it with ease is more likely to receive the benefit of any doubt about inconsistencies than one who manipulates 'only' a camera in this way. We might also compare her

confident discussion of 'symbolism' with Kevin's perception in Chapter Five that it positioned him in class and gender specific ways that he rejected.

Further, since media forms and languages are instruments students 'deploy' (UCLES), practice is only rewarded if it can be seen as the outcome of an agency that is singular, disembodied and self-aware – if 'The form of the product (is) wholly appropriate to the stated intention(s)' (NEAB) or shows 'an understanding of the significance of the decision making process which led to (its) construction' (UCLES). NEAB proposes an 'Unclassified' mark for work that creates the impression 'of having been produced *in vacuo*; that is, it will not have arisen from any real stated intention and *thus* (my emphasis) there will be very little in terms of meaningful evaluation'. The notion that students' work will be necessarily meaningless without an inner plan or systematic account of their actions flies in the face of 'common sense' (we can speak without knowing the rules of grammar, for instance). Such criteria mean that examiners will always receive from students' academic writing the imposed coherence that omits what is most interesting about creative work and makes it a 'pure lie', as Ian says. Since students from the first case study are unlikely to have pored over syllabus requirements before they wrote their commentaries, I can only assume that their willingness to falsify accounts of the production process shows how closely these criteria correspond to classically modernist educational assumptions.

In my descriptions in Chapter Six, I hope to have shown that students produced competent, meaningful and intelligent work that achieved things for themselves and others in a specific time and place (creating laughter, acting out fantasies or solving problems at a practical or ideological level). But it was not the result of intentionally following rules; students improvised and innovated in an ad hoc way, in response to material circumstances and to the others around them, as Richard's commentary conveys so succinctly. They did not act on the basis of what they had been taught, not least because many of the conventions identified in the teaching were irrelevant to them (Jason is perhaps the most obvious example). They were not and perhaps could not be aware of much of what they did. Their meanings were obscure to them, but also to me, both at the time and

[1] The quotations here come from the syllabi produced for 1998 and 1999, i.e. those with which Geoff and Kate were working during the period of my observation. I turn to the most recent OCR syllabus in the conclusion.

subsequently. According to the guidelines above, therefore, they can barely be accredited for what they did.

John Shotter's work helps us appreciate the accomplishments in these 'everyday' activities. He incorporates the work of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Billig, Wittgenstein and others to describe a 'practical-moral knowledge' or 'knowing of the third kind' that is neither abstract (knowledge that or why) nor technical (knowing how). It is 'knowledge of a *moral* kind, for it depends upon the judgements of *others* as to whether its expression or its use is ethically proper or not – one cannot just have it or express it on one's own, or wholly within one's self. It is the kind of knowledge one has *only has from within a social situation*, a group, or an institution, and which thus takes into account (and is accountable to) the *others* in the social situation within which it is known' (Shotter 1993: 7, his emphasis). It is practical in that it enables us to act 'appropriately', but it is a background knowledge that one thinks *out of* in order to act *into* a situation. He derives from Vygotsky, in opposition to many interpretations, a definition of conceptual thinking as 'grasping how to do things in a socially intelligible way that makes sense to certain others' (134) that would allow us to see students' productions as evidence of conceptual thinking. Bourdieu's concept of habitus, too, shows that whilst it is structured by family, class, education and so on, it is also creative. The understanding it provides can be applied across a wide range of situations, allowing for improvisation and the generation of 'meaningful practices and meaning-giving perceptions' (Bourdieu 1984: 170). His example of the artist or the sports player, who acts on a 'feel' for the medium or the game and thus demonstrates 'practical mastery', is apt in relation to students. It is also relevant to teaching; the habitus tells teachers what is offensive, cruel or hurtful, what they like and dislike in students' work, and it is likewise creative. 'Good' teaching derives not only from the information teachers possess, but from the acquired experience that leads them to sense when a discussion is going well enough to be allowed to disrupt a lesson plan, when to compromise, when to say 'let's move on'.

The emergent paradigm locates understanding in a wider range of practices than conscious rule-following and is thus more hospitable to such ways of knowing. It would suggest a different interpretation of the assessment criteria above. The

proposal that teaching can begin with practical work implies that students already possess the knowledge necessary to construct meaningful representations. Teaching strategies (including but not confined to the provision of theory) and writing help students to reconstruct and thus to explain what was formerly enacted spontaneously. The process is described as one in which students are 'inevitably forced to make their implicit knowledge explicit, to make it systematic and thence to question it' (Buckingham, Grahame, and Sefton-Green 1995: 143). However, I would suggest that this epistemological model remains overly intellectualist. Despite its rejection of views of youth audiences as uncritical consumers of the media before the educational experience, the structure of the sentence ('thence') suggests that only once knowledge is made explicit can it be questioned. 'Truly' critical understanding, then, resides in that which we consciously represent. This may imply that affective and concrete modes of thinking are a stage that must be gone beyond (by 'force' if necessary) to superior abstract, conceptual ones. Since within this paradigm too language is seen as an instrument, as I argued in Chapter Six, the purpose of writing is primarily to illuminate the reasons behind actions (aims, choices, decisions made and so on). It can also – in principle – do so 'systematically', that is, capture the understandings implicit in practice in a complete way, within a rational framework. In this respect, it is likely still to favour fictions of coherent agency over tales of haplessness.

Shotter emphasises the social embeddedness or 'rhetorical-responsiveness' rather than systematicity of practical-moral knowledge. Thus our meanings cannot be grasped by reflecting on intentions, and nor can we make them on our own, because everything we do is the result of joint action, of responses to and by others around us. I would add that they are also the product of the 'other' of language, which is not fully controllable by the subject, and of the unconscious, that which the subject does not and perhaps cannot bear to know. Felman describes the unconscious as 'a kind of *unmeant knowledge* which escapes intentionality and meaning, a knowledge which is spoken by the language of the subject (spoken, for instance, by his "slips" or by his dream), but which the subject cannot recognize, assume as *his*, appropriate; a speaking knowledge which is nonetheless denied to the speaker's knowledge' (1997 (1982): 24). I have suggested that something of this 'unmeant knowledge' was spoken by

Lauren and Richard; reckoning with it, as Felman argues, undermines the notion that an exhaustive understanding can ever be achieved. What we know is also embodied – 'carried in patterns of appropriate action' (Taylor 1999: 35) that encode an understanding of the environment and one's relationship to others – and hence our bodies are more than just 'executants of the goals we frame' (ibid.: 34). Pedagogic authority, for example, is displayed in how teachers speak, hold themselves and move in the classroom. Recall my brief description in Chapter Five of how Kate placed herself between David and Kevin to stop their fight. 'Knowing' that this was the right action to take in that moment is very different from the 'knowing' that would explain why she did so, or instruct others in how to deal with similar situations in the future. At issue here is not whether or not we try to translate the first knowing into the second (since it would clearly serve important ends), but that the attempt should not be conceived as making it 'systematic'.

To conceptualise the subject as 'engaged in practices', Taylor argues, requires us to acknowledge that our implicit understanding goes 'well beyond what we manage to frame representations of'. Representations are thus radically inadequate to the task of explaining what we do, 'islands in the sea of our unformulated practical grasp on the world' rather than the 'primary locus of our understanding' (Taylor 1999: 34). My accounts of students' work, for example, as I have noted on several occasions, are limited, variable and the result of reinterpretations over many years. The theories I use to understand what they did should not be confused with the principles governing their practice, as Bourdieu has stated (cited in Bouveresse 1999: 46). Moreover, they are not self-explanatory, but only comprehensible against an extensive background of assumptions - for instance, that sexuality is socially constructed and unstable, or that 'the unconscious' is a meaningful category of analysis. The process of articulating these is a necessary part of intellectual work. However, any further explanation I offer would still take something for granted (and be shaped by my own blindnesses), so my persuasiveness would depend more on the shared understanding of an interlocutor than on my ability to reach a foundation from which all can come to light.

It is for such reasons that Felman writes of the 'impossibility' of teaching. I can offer my interpretations to Lauren and Richard. But, given our different world views, even if they are prepared to accept them ('maybe') or praise them ('excellent'), it is not clear whether they would be able to learn from them, if by this we understand taking them on as their own. If, as I have argued, their work was the product of social prohibitions (against men being vulnerable or women being violent), they may well 'resist' by forgetting or mishearing them. Perhaps they will return to them in years to come if they need them, but currently, they are arrows fired into infinity. In the meantime, teachers face the pressing task of helping students write a commentary within a few days or weeks of producing their work.

Several critics have suggested that we need to develop hermeneutics rather than explanations to deal with such experiential, intuitive or unconscious knowledge. Shotter proposes studying how our understanding shapes our practice through a process in which we 'assign a shared significance to our actions' (1993). Probyn's work seeks to value our experience or 'ontological being' but without egotism and individualism, and suggests an epistemological approach that respects difference by asking not 'who am I?' but 'what am I ... for her?' (1993). Some have borrowed approaches from psychoanalytic theory, not in order to turn the classroom into a therapeutic space, but to go beyond didactic models and instead attend to the conditions which make learning possible. They have emphasised therefore the structure of address between teacher and student, rather than the provision of a ready-made knowledge that displaces ignorance (Felman 1997 (1982)). Ellsworth builds on Felman's work to call for pedagogies that 'reflect back' not an answer but a 'difference', by speaking from a place that can change a student's relationship to her question (Ellsworth 1997: 69). Butler, as noted in the last chapter, similarly argues for practices that enhance responsibility (or accountability) for representations, by returning them to speakers in a form that exposes the excess between the meanings they 'intended' and those communicated (Butler 1997). I appropriate these ideas here to continue the interest of the emergent paradigm in constructing contexts that give students a different way of relating to the knowledge they have and in which they can reflect on the stories they tell from the perspectives of others. However, I hold that we should focus how we can collectively and retrospectively

generate partial and provisional interpretations of meanings, rather than insist on rational explanations and justifications. I will argue that the strategies here contribute to social justice, in the sense of being achievable by students from a wider range of backgrounds, and connecting them to broader discursive struggles and debates.

Tools of investigation

In this section, I will consider existing media education strategies within the terms Shotter offers. He argues for tools or modes of *investigation* that respect the unfinalisability and undecidability of meaning and intention yet enhance the 'intelligibility' of our knowledge. Intelligibility has a cost, since it falsifies how we actually live our lives – which has little to do with self-consciously following rules - but it makes actions 'visibly rational' for intellectual purposes. He offers two categories of such 'tools' of investigation, 'prostheses' and 'indicators' (1993: 21-23). Prostheses are tools, a means we learn and feel through. They are 'on our side', responsive to us and to the environment, and enable us to move from a 'subsidiary' to a 'focal' awareness of the qualities of the materials we are working with. The example he gives is how hammering a nail into a piece of wood develops our awareness of its hardness in a way that just looking at it would not. People, by contrast, are indicators since they remain other to us and must be interpreted as texts are; their responses encourage us to further investigation. Language is both - a prosthetic where we achieve things through it (to make 'practical meanings'), and an indicator where it has to be read (as education might encourage students to do).

Thinking of media technology as a prosthetic would reinforce existing perspectives on the centrality of practical work to learning about the media. For instance, consider Michael's description of one sequence:

> The shot that I wanted to set up most exact was one of the early shots that was set indoors which was the killer's point of view and you can see the blade of the knife that he was holding and he is creeping up behind his victim in the passage of the house. The light was coming from an artificial source as it is set at night and the light is on, also the killer's shadow is on the floor. This sequence consists of three shots, where two are of the killer behind his victim and getting closer and the final shot is at the front of the victim as he is getting his throat slashed by the killer who

you don't see. These shots create the suspense of the beginning of the film.

Viewed from the perspective of some media educators, this 'imitation' of the familiar (indeed, he even writes about setting up the sequence 'exact') cannot be seen as an achievement. However, it is not an effortless task. In playing with the camera and with light sources, he begins to appreciate what is involved in the texts he watches. He expresses some of this in the animation with which he writes, referring in detail to a range of technical aspects – camera distance, lighting, angle, point of view and so on – in stark contrast to the arbitrary listing of conventions discussed in Chapter Six[2]. As others have already argued, the experience of production teaches students to 'feel' their way into the media in a way that analysis alone cannot, as well as offering a powerful new identity as equal and match for professionals (Buckingham, Grahame, and Sefton-Green 1995).

Shotter suggests that our focus should shift from the individual as source of action, to our social surroundings and what they 'afford' or 'permit', how we negotiate with them, and this may be a useful way of asking students to conceive of their encounter with technology. An emphasis on the individual produces accounts in which students discuss how they met their 'intentions' as if technology is something that can be bent to their will. Many teachers acknowledge how unrealistic these are, either in their representation of the planning process or their analysis of their products, as I suggested in relation to Stephen's commentary (Chapter Six). Further, students may not feel able to comment on what was unintended. Yet it was clear that some shots that were entirely accidental most delighted them. For instance, many students wanted an image of a 'full moon' and initially sought to obtain it by realist means - photographing the actual moon. They were soon defeated by the exigencies of the weather (if it was cloudy), the time of the month, or by the fact that the results bore little resemblance to the image they sought. However, Neil describes how he was 'exceptionally pleased' with a shot that was 'meant to be a person under a street lamp' but which turned out to approximate the moon very effectively.

[2] The use of technology should reassure those concerned about 'copying'. One student in the first case study sketched an imaginative and detailed storyboard rather than taking photographs. I was very impressed by it, and initially wondered whether taking actual pictures could have been an obstacle for such explorations. Months later, however, I saw an episode of *The X-Files* and realised that he had lifted every image from its opening sequence. We could argue that even the most directly 'copied' set-up using a camera would be a more valuable learning experience.

Michael tells how 'by accident I was taking a close-up picture of a bright lamp and it came out looking like a full moon with an emerald light coming from it as the shot was over-exposed. This was very fortunate as I needed three shots of the moon for my sequence'. On his video cover, he juxtaposed this hyper-real image with a 'realist' shot of a housing estate, producing complex contrasts of meaning. However, he does not explore this, writing in his next sentence that 'I knew exactly what I wanted such as the camera positions/ distance and how the final shots should look'. It might be more revealing (and interesting) to hear more about these various surprises, how technology changed their understanding of the representational possibilities in the world, than these continual assertions of mastery and control with no content.

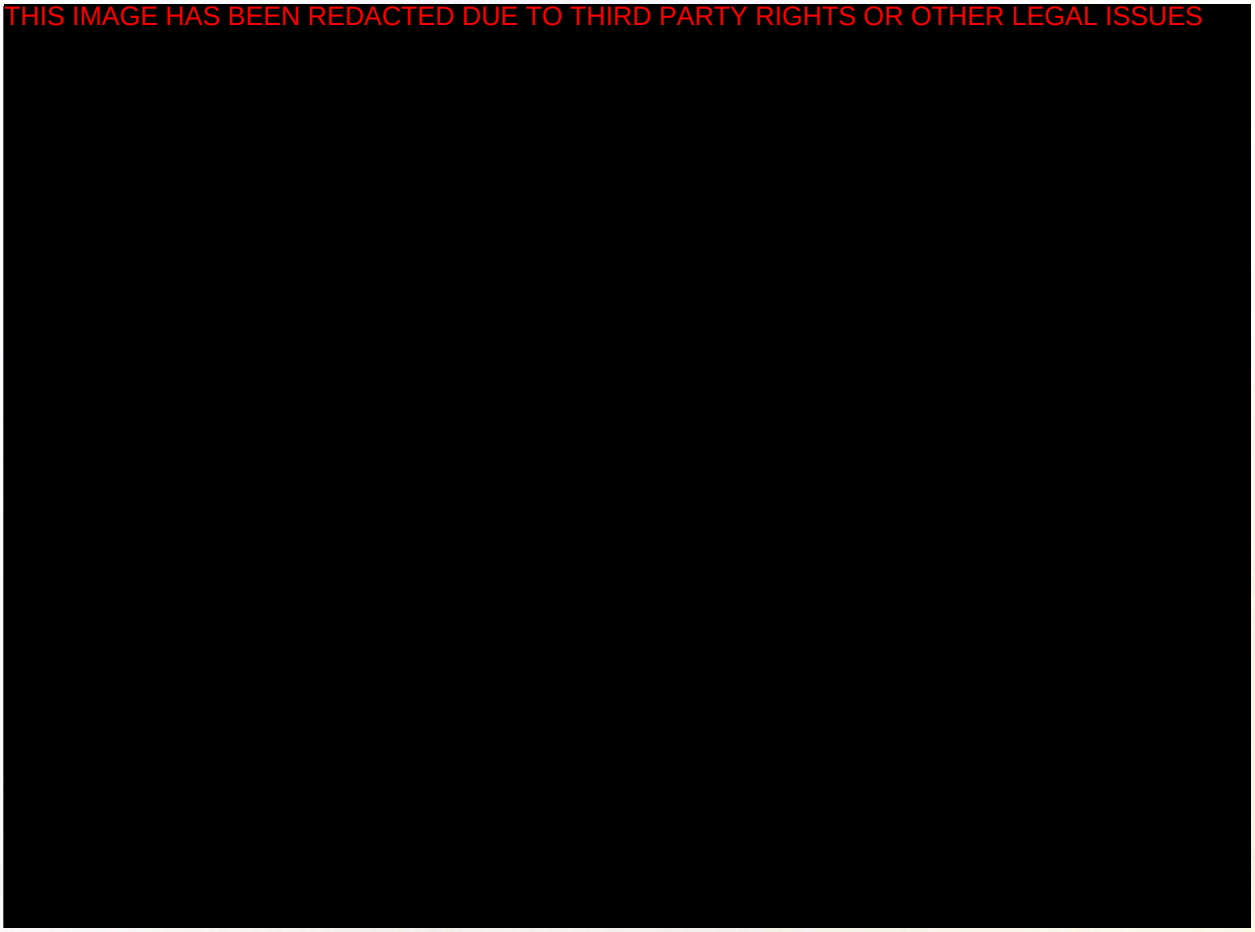

Figure 17: Michael's video cover, 'Bloody Hell'

Teachers are frequently dismissive if students catalogue the problems of practical work. Representatively, Buckingham, for instance, complains about accounts that provide 'an enormous amount of detail about who did what and when and how, but very little about *why*'. He goes on to contrast these with the

'more evaluative and reflective approach' that his audience research project 'automatically forced' from students (1995: 163), as if descriptions lack any reflective dimension. However, since teachers are so unsuccessful in preventing students recounting the things that matter to them, we might work with them to focus *how* they do so. Shotter suggests we need 'critical descriptions', which explore, in an intelligible way, how we do something in practice (1993: 82). As I have argued in relation to Richard, descriptive writing is often more amenable to students than the pressures of what they perceive as an analytic mode that demands reasons for their every choice. We might, for instance, ask students to concentrate on 'describing' one particular moment at which technology was a frustrating limit, and how they improvised creatively to circumvent it. These might form the basis of presentations to classmates during the process of production, promoting both joint reflection and future adaptations and innovations. We would need to develop assessment criteria based on the insights these provide, such as their clarity in outlining the dimensions of the problem and their utility in other situations.

We might also recall David's point about technology as an answer to ideological dilemmas of content, mentioned in Chapter Six. The process of translating excessive fantasies into actual images may be far more informative for students like Jason than being berated for having them in the first place. In Jason's case, his inexperience with the technology led to a disappointing production. However, this may raise further difficult issues for teachers. If media technology is recognised more fully as a language, we need to spend more time teaching students how to 'speak' it, especially those like Jason who do not even possess a camera at home. Not only may this seem technicist, but it also suggests that in relation to forms like horror we may be of more use to them by giving them a recipe for 'blood'[3] than a handout.

Shotter's work would retain a place for written and spoken language as an indicator, a means to translate between or play with ordinary and non-ordinary forms of discourse in order to investigate our meanings. As I suggested in Chapter Four, inviting students to speak in different ways, as 'programme makers', for instance, may release a wider range of voices into the classroom

[3] Syrup, washing up liquid, red and blue food colouring.

and are more conducive to participation. Theoretical or conceptual discourse – as well as constituting socially valued cultural capital - may bring students' attention to particular features of texts, make them debatable by placing them in a broader context. The more formalist analyses that critics such as Clover, Tudor and Carroll provide seemed to be useful to students in the second case study with Kate. Many referenced them in their writing although they felt less able to 'challenge', for instance, Carroll's definition of horror as we encouraged them to do along the lines of Sconce's critique (Chapter Two). We should invite, perhaps, the kinds of 'conversations' with theory that Marc describes having in the class. 'While watching I kept asking myself, "is this a horror movie?" and "what makes it a horror movie?" I found myself in agreement with the conclusions reached by Noel Carroll; we fear the inexplicable and the abnormal!'. To a certain extent, I would endorse Turnbull's argument that '"other people's theories" should only ever be introduced as a set of explanatory possibilities which may or may not fit our own or our students' experience of the text' (1998: 101), rather than as a totalising and definitive answer. But in contrast to her reference to 'experience' as self-evident, I would emphasise the need to consider the identities and speaking positions such theories offer students and ensure we provide a range. Clover's work, for instance, could not 'fit' my own 'experience' of slashers because I had barely seen any when I read it; I responded to the new self-imaginings it provided, so it was felicitous rather than accurate. We should also be self-reflexive about the meanings that 'specialised' terms may have for students. As I suggested in relation to Jason and Kevin, the concepts we teach (such as 'mainstream' and 'symbolism') may well be 'heard' very differently by students.

The proviso here is the need to distinguish more carefully between what makes actions possible with what makes them 'visibly rational for intellectual purposes', or between language as a prosthetic and as an indicator, in Shotter's terms. The formulations that teachers offer may often not relate to the understandings embedded in students' practice, as I emphasised in my analysis of my and Kate's response to Richard's work. Whilst commentaries always require students to place their work within a tradition or genre, they tend to stress those that teachers have seen fit to mention. We could encourage them to write in concrete detail about the associations, resemblances and relations between their work

and the existing products they know (rather than invidious comparisons), telling us how and what they have selected and combined, how they have shaped material to their own interests. We need to reassure them that because their work is saturated with influences this does not mean that it is not theirs. To do so would link accountability with representation as repetition, not as origination, as Butler has argued. Further, it would enable teachers to understand the frames of reference that are relevant for students – and potentially to reassess what might be useful to them.

Reflecting back a difference: the 'real' audience

However, I am not yet sure that these approaches respond effectively to the practice of a student such as Richard. As I noted, his draft commentary did not clarify much of the background understanding that shaped it and spoke only to an immediate circle of friends. He needs to make progress, for his own sake (to create the more distanced perspective that the school will validate, to improve his grades, and for his 'personal development' in gaining a purchase on what he knows). We might also wish him to appreciate the meanings and possible consequences of his representations for others. (Thus my argument here does aim to respond to the concerns raised by educators in the last chapter about 'objectionable' and 'offensive' material produced by students, although I reject readings of Richard's work that would claim this of his). I doubt that he will be able to do so within theoretical or academic discourse, however. He had started the A-Level course 'on trial', since his GCSE results were poor, and when Kate asked him questions in class, he would often turn red and struggle to reply. Since he was more 'articulate' with a camera than some obviously academically confident students, we need to find a way to accredit his ability in terms that are accessible to him.

Thus, my final proposal for helping students to value and understand what they do is the encounter with 'real audiences'. This notion has been advocated for many years (perhaps first by Murdock and Phelps 1973), but there is less consensus about its purpose. In Morgan's arguments for 'everyday life' pedagogies, media education is a way of 'bringing things home' through forms of production that 'might make a difference to local communities' (1998). This

appears to be part of a postmodern shift away from decontextualised, abstract education models and towards the local, concrete and specific. I would applaud this general perspective, but wonder whether he has predetermined who students are to be. He writes that 'dealing with popular media inevitably means addressing everyday experience, local contexts and public issues' and envisions media educators as 'breaching the divisions between formal education, everyday life and public culture' through 'publicly responsive discursive production' (127-8). His emphasis on the 'public', the quotidian and on students' 'lifeworlds' may suggest that he, like Masterman and Giroux, would address students as 'concerned citizens' – which may, I have argued, overlook the pleasures for students of escaping everyday identities which require them to speak in confining and burdensome ways.

By contrast, in one account by Buckingham and Sefton-Green, investigating audience uses, preferences and tastes, etc, serves to enhance separation rather than the relationality I myself would seek; students are empowered to do research 'on their own behalf' and are placed in 'positions of control' (1994: 109-110). One advantage is claimed to be methodological – students learn to question the processes by which 'received knowledge' is produced by media institutions or academics. However, this emphasis on the epistemological may ultimately reinforce students' sense of the disparity between their work and that of 'professionals'. As I described in relation to Kate's use of this approach, it may also underestimate the derailing force of the ontological (the desire to 'be' someone other than a 'critical student'). Additionally, such research is said to promote 'social self-understanding', in which students come to appreciate how they are themselves 'members of broader audiences, defined and placed by wider social and economic forces'. Yet as they acknowledge, social categories – especially class and race – prove awkward and hard to define. Their conclusion that 'ultimately, their difficulties in articulating this understanding may simply reflect the complexity of the issues involved' (117) may raise the question of how feasible this project is with younger or less 'able' students.

Chris Richards suggests an approach that seeks both to underscore local specificity and community and to enhance self-understanding in social terms, proposing that teachers circulate students' media productions between schools

(1998: 176). He envisages this as creating 'dialogue and contrast', enabling students who are 'differently located' to examine and situate themselves in relation to others, although he does question where the evidence of significant learning would be judged to have occurred. As will be clear, I am indebted to him for this idea, and I aim to respond to this last point in particular.

Finally, Buckingham outlines a project in which students conducted 'focus group' research with younger students who were representative of their 'target audience' (1995). Responses were to be incorporated into their planning and evaluation of a trailer sequence for a TV series. He begins by arguing that this would encourage students to 'see their own work through others' eyes' (143), but does not quite deliver on the promise to decentre from egotism. His evaluation is based instead on how far it 'forced' students to question the methodology, or to justify and make explicit their choices (to write as knowing, challenging and rational subjects) – and acknowledges relatively limited success in either. Moreover, the task raised a series of ideological issues over one group's proposals for a sitcom revolving around 'a feminist, a tart, a sexist, rude Greek and a gay'. There may have been two particular problems here. In the first place, the focus groups were initially asked to respond to students' ideas rather than the finished product. As my analyses of students' scenarios indicate, all kinds of intense fantasies are invested in these, and it may be more appropriate to focus on outcomes instead. Secondly, as Shotter states, there can be something disturbing about assessment from a third person perspective – that he refers to as the 'Other who is judge and witness' - as it challenges one's right to have what one says taken at face value (136). Students' dismissive or defensive reactions to their focus groups may have derived from the fact that they perceived them as judges of their work. However, my argument will be that we should, and to a limited extent can, separate out the notions of the other as 'judge and witness'.

Towards the end of the second case study, I conducted an exchange with the college in Sussex at which I had formerly taught and where students were also completing production work on horror, which combined aspects of these arguments. I screened all Kate's students' videos to two classes, taped and transcribed comments, and fed them back in the form of a general summary and

copies of sections relevant to their own work. The exercise was clearly more extended than practising teachers would be able to manage, so I am not proposing its wholesale implementation, and have included a more detailed account of my procedures and the issues it raised in Appendix IV. However, the process clarified for me what had already gone on in both phases of the research and enables me to explain what audience feedback might achieve.

The most important question I asked was not 'how good is it?' or 'which do you prefer?' but more neutrally, 'what is going on here, and how do you know?' The 'audience' proved highly perceptive in reading even quite brief images, understanding, for instance, the use of black and white to signify past events, or the red dress of a character that marked her out as 'impure' and thus a slasher 'victim'. The fact that they used their specialised vocabulary as Media Studies students to discuss camera angles, shot distance, horror conventions and so on, may have been affirmative in reflecting back an image to Kate's students of themselves as knowledgeable and skilled (perhaps more so than they realised)[4].

Secondly, the exchange may have served to make both groups aware of the attention and competence that audiences bring to their readings. The Sussex students drew on their familiarity with other relevant texts to understand the particular sub-genre and predict the storyline, often with a fair degree of accuracy. Confusions were productive, since they were often based on 'minor' details such as continuity errors that students might otherwise have overlooked in their commentaries. Jayne offered a detailed response: 'I thoroughly enjoyed the making of my sequence and was very pleased with the end result. However, there were a few mistakes made that could not be rectified unfortunately and did affect the audiences' understanding of the plot. (....) The mistakes aforementioned were the sudden change of clothes experienced by both characters that feature in the title sequence (due to the photos being taken in two days) and also, a shot of a hand holding a match, which should have been naked, was in fact covered by the sleeve of a coat, which Emma had been

[4] This is a different inflection of Felman and Ellsworth's arguments about returning meanings from a 'different vantage point'. They emphasise the reflection back of silences, stuck places and ignorance. I have argued that we may need to respect what students need not to know. More pragmatically, teachers often believe they have to be critical of students' work to help them evaluate it. The exchange here highlighted for me how it might be potentially constructive for teachers to use their specialised media terms to describe students' work, and thus help them appreciate the skill in what they produce spontaneously. I would like to thank Hyeon-Seon Jeong for bringing this point to my attention (Jeong unpublished).

wearing in previous shots, so she appeared to be the killer, which is the complete opposite. (....) The audience picked up strongly on both points'. These practical demonstrations of audience 'decoding' skills may be a more effective means to debunk myths of the TV zombie than reading accounts of research by others.

Thirdly, it enabled students to consider the ambiguity of representations and what their work might signify to others. Toni, for instance, did not explicitly reference the feedback she received, but incorporated it: 'In shot 2 the Southend pier sign seems almost like a circus. This shot was not planned to look like this and create the effect of fear of clowns, so therefore it could easily make the audience believe the film was to do with clowns and either confuse them or make the film unexpected which could also ruin the enjoyment of predictability'. Pam wrote that 'The feedback I got from my questionnaire contradicted my own personal opinion of the narrative. The answers that I got from my questionnaire suggested that even though I felt as though my narrative was classic of horror, the images and music that I produced suggested otherwise'. As a result, students seemed able to write in a way that opened up new questions, looking into a future. Pam continued 'The group suggested that improvements could be made on the setting of the corridor, as it did not correlate with the gothic building, and the fact that the monster was wearing a "Kickers" sweatshirt undermined the consistency of the sequence'. These more hesitant reflections on what meanings they may have produced for others and how they might improve their work seem preferable to the fictional and egotistic elaborations of self or the finality of textual commentary so often offered by students from the first phase.

It also indicated to me as an adult and 'outsider' to youth culture what might be the appropriate ways of reading the videos. When Kate and I first saw Richard's work, for instance, we both laughed, but exchanged looks that indicated that we were concerned about how we 'should' respond to it. The Sussex teacher declared emphatically that she 'didn't like it at all'. The students, like Richard's classmates, found it hilarious and 'cool', but they were not - as I perhaps feared - thereby endorsing its 'values'. They immediately identified the soundtrack as borrowed from *Pulp Fiction* (which I had not at that stage) and thus inferred a range of information about the tastes and identity of the producer. They joked

particularly about a shot of the killer creeping up on the victim with his arms outstretched. Some mocked it – 'is he dancing?!' – and another, choking with laughter, said it looked to her as though his mother had connected the woolly gloves with string to keep them together. In some ways, this was a particularly perspicuous comment, since it drew together the two themes – violence, and boys who nevertheless haven't quite detached from their mothers – that I have claimed Richard explored separately in his video and commentary. Of course, the social context may have made it important for the Sussex students (especially the female ones, perhaps) to assert their insight in this way. It also barely needs stating that it might be precisely what Richard does not need or want to know. However, it does show the value of feedback from audiences that roughly approximate probable target groups, rather than relying on teachers' own judgements of what is ideologically acceptable.

The exercise also enabled me to identify how others had consistently played a role in shaping students' understanding of their work. The issue is thus not to change our practice radically, but to formalise such interactions and be explicit about incorporating them into the evaluation process. Although some students were reluctant to acknowledge 'help' from teachers, others did recount how Kate and I had been useful in commenting on how we interpreted the images they produced. A greater number talked about responses by friends. For instance, I had been rather concerned that several students, like Lauren, created narratives that used ethnicity as a motive for murder, and wondered whether the teachers should have addressed this issue. In interviews, however, it turned out that, to their surprise, their friends had already questioned them on their 'racism'. It may have been easier for them to 'hear' this from peers than judgementally from teachers. Jason also remarked that several girls had told him his scenario was 'sexist' – and that his difficulty in filming a 'rape' scene was mainly that they all refused point blank to play the victim role. We underestimate young people's resourcefulness and resilience if we assume that only teachers have a grasp on the ideological implications of material. Finally, teachers for whom addressing the 'racism' and 'sexism' of representations has been a thankless task in the immediate classroom moment, can take heart from the comments here. It appears that some students, at least, have been listening more carefully than we might think. They make use of these notions when it serves their purposes, even

if these are the conduct of their own specific power struggles and personal relations rather than a higher end of universal emancipation.

A wrestling move

I want to specify the benefits and potential pitfalls of the approaches considered here through an analysis of Richard's finished commentary. The final version was longer than the first draft. The plot outline was reduced to a single sentence and the piece as a whole was nearly 1000 words in length. It uses a slightly different narrative voice; the 'Melack' story remains, but the tense used is all the past, rather than the occasional switch to present as in the first version, and much of the direct speech is rendered in indirect form. At a number of points, Richard tries to respond to Kate's comments on his first draft and to situate his work more firmly in the context of the course. She asked him to 'distinguish early and modern horror' and to identify 'other films' with marauding cameramen. Thus, after the first sentence of his second paragraph (line 5 in the original), he inserts 'e.g. George Romero's *Night of the living dead* (1968) marketed the arrival of the zombie as a central figure of horror'. This phrase comes directly from the handout on the 'history of horror' that I had supplied, except that I wrote 'marked', and still does little to explain his own choice of a murderous 'park ranger'. After the outline of the scenario he writes 'In a way it's like Michael Powell's British *Peeping Tom* (1960) where a man records the death of his victims, like Al Sunshine he is a masochist who likes seeing people's pain'. He also expands the description of the course: 'we watched the opening sequences from some popular horror films, e.g. *Friday 13th*, *Candyman*, *Halloween* and even *Peeping Tom* to get the idea of what shots to use and other bits and bobs that might help us when making our own'. He is decidedly vague about the purpose of the study, and still does not offer an analysis of the structure and function of such sequences. Our comparison to *Peeping Tom* does not appear to have given him much insight into the psychic processes of sadism and masochism, as his inaccurate definition of the term suggests, and he sounds somewhat incredulous ('in a way', 'even') about its relation to his own work.

As teachers we may frequently become irritated when we see our teaching reflected back in such a distorted manner. However, it should not surprise us

that our 'theory' has not made Richard's work any more intelligible to him. 'Post-1960s' horror may not seem 'modern' to someone born in 1982 (and in any case, to the extent that Richard's work can indeed be considered a splatter movie, as I argued in the last chapter, its roots stretch back into the previous century). By insisting he relate his film to those studied on the course, particularly the quite different traditions of Michael Powell, we prevent him writing about the gangster and Tarantino texts that may in fact have been more relevant for him.

Richard's last paragraph summarises the views of the Sussex students:

> When I got a report back on my opening sequence, the students had said that it was 'cool' and easy to follow, the music made it more like a comedy and it had lightened the mood too much. They could understand what was happening and they liked the way the pictures were taken at night, to give it a more scary effect. They had a bit to say about the costume, there is a shot of Al Sunshine's gloves, the gloves were made of wool and they said that it would have been a better idea if he was wearing leather gloves. In the end it was a good report, the only thing that didn't go well according to them was the music.

Although the students' comments are incorporated wholesale, they may account for a number of changes. Richard does now sound somewhat defensive of his choice of music. For instance, he claims that he used *Jungle Boogie* because it was 'such a cool song!'. He identifies the genre as 'comedy horror': 'that's why I used a wrestling move called *The Million dollar dream* and *'Jungle boogie'* by Kool & the Gang for my music instead of some long droning music or hard rock like other horror films. To show that this is a comedy horror on my front cover there is a big picture of Al Sunshine's smiling face. I wrote the title of the film *18 With A Bullet* in red to indicate blood and death, to show that although there is comedy in it, there is also a lot of gore'. This last sentence suggests that he may have wanted his film to be gorier and more violent than it turned out to be. Calling it a comedy horror may be a post-hoc rationalisation in response to students' amusement at it, but we might see this as a valid attempt to define it from the perspective of an audience rather than to assume his intentions were achieved. Describing the feedback as a 'report' shows that the opinions of others may well be taken as a judgement rather than a supportive interaction. However, it may be important that they turned out to be reasonably sympathetic – not, at least, the scholastic voice that denounces his work as 'shit'.

When he assesses his finished product, he does so in the following terms:

> I was disappointed in some of the shots, there is one with Marc and Melack around a camp fire in Al Sunshine's park with a tent behind them, the tent was made out of two benches and a bed sheet. I had hoped that it wouldn't look too bad in the photo, but when it came out it was blatantly obvious that it wasn't a tent, it looked cheap and tatty. Also the shots with the blood looked ugly, there wasn't going to be blood in my opening sequence, so I didn't have time to get something that looked like blood, so I used tomato ketchup in the photos, and again it just made it look cheap and ugly.

He does now adopt a position outside his text, examining the finished product with some distance. His disappointment in the 'blood' may be a response to a Sussex student's comment about 'baked bean sauce', although none noted the inadequacies of the 'tent'. (It is a shame that he has not felt able to celebrate his improvisation there). As teachers, we may be uncertain about the analytic reach of his focus on the 'effects', and I will return to this.

Most significantly, the commentary speaks to a wider audience that cannot necessarily be assumed to share his implicit understandings. For instance, he explains that the swimming pool was in the garden of a 'mate'. The denouement of the Melack story specifies in parentheses the nature of the throat-slitting solution: 'I told him no worries, and slit his throat (in the opening sequence)'. He keeps the joke, but shows awareness of an audience who might misread his intention and require reassurance that the violence was indeed only an imaginary one. And the 'Million Dollar Dream' is explained as a 'wrestling move'. Now he is reckoning with an other who is different from him, moving outside the strictly local community of those 'in the know' he addressed in his first draft.

And in turn he lets me see something of his cultural background, and thus to view his work with new eyes. What seemed an arbitrary gesture I can return to and appreciate as choreographed, skilled and carefully staged. It also makes me curious. I cannot assume that my own understanding of wrestling will correspond in any way to that of a teenage boy, but his reference impels me to pick my battered copy of Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* from my bookshelf. The first sentence of 'The World of Wrestling' tells me that 'The virtue of all-in wrestling is that it is the spectacle of excess' (Barthes 1972: 15). It continues:

> There are people who think that wrestling is an ignoble sport. Wrestling is not a sport, it is a spectacle, and it is no more ignoble to attend a wrestled performance of Suffering than a performance of the sorrows of Arnolphe or Andromaque.... True wrestling ... is performed in second-rate halls, where the public spontaneously attunes itself to the spectacular nature of the contest, like the audience at a suburban cinema ... it abandons itself to the primary virtue of the spectacle, which is to abolish all motives and all consequences: what matters is not what it thinks but what it sees .... Each sign in wrestling is therefore endowed with an absolute clarity, since one must always understand everything on the spot .... (the wrestler) constantly help(s) the reading of the fight by means of gestures, attitudes and mimicry which make the intention utterly obvious .... There is no more a problem of truth in wrestling than in the theatre. In both, what is expected is the intelligible representation of moral situations which are usually private.... The spectator does not wish for the actual suffering of the contestant; he only enjoys the perfection of an iconography. It is not true that wrestling is a sadistic spectacle: it is only an intelligible spectacle... (This stylised character, the perfect 'bastard' wrestler, is) someone unstable, who accepts the rules only when they are useful to him and transgresses the formal continuity of attitudes. He is unpredictable, therefore asocial...

In reading these words, I connect not to Richard's intention, nor to his authentic voice, but to his difference. As the video exchange has shifted who he can be in his writing, so he has reached out in a way that takes me beyond my own interpretations of his images, my own interest in psychoanalysis and sexuality. So there may be a link between his tastes in film and for wrestling, and it is my own judgement that is out of kilter if I assess either only within the terms of traditional cultural hierarchies and fail to recognise the aesthetics of the spectacular and excessive. So Richard's disappointment in the 'tomato ketchup' is not shallow and lacking in depth, but derives from an appreciation of the need to 'perfect iconography'; and Sunshine, the kind Christian and amoral psychopath, is a stylised 'bastard' whose psychological incoherence is appropriately transgressive. So this world is not sadistic, degraded or meaningless. It is, after all, intelligible.

As I marvel at the declarative confidence of Barthes's words, I recognise the voice of someone from another world and time – this was, after all, written in 1957. On the last page, I encounter another stranger; my own younger self, who scribbled 'cf. Panurge' in the margins. Clearly, 'I' was making links, was 'learning', but across a gap of some sixteen years, far removed from the identity of a French undergraduate, this comment is obscure to me now. If knowledge is

so deeply contextual, so embedded in specific traditions to render it meaningful that I cannot even rejoin myself, how, I wonder, can I understand – still less judge - Richard before we have established conditions in which we might be able to converse with one another?

Figure 18: A wrestling move

Conclusion: Lessons and Futures

I relish the paradox of building a demand for 'ethical' media education around a genre so often represented as one which will lead us into moral chaos. My study of young people's relation to horror should give us grounds for hope, because it shows that they are not, after all, helplessly lost in the forest of contemporary culture and preyed on by the ogres that lurk there. The signposts they need to find their way around it are offered already, if we could only see them.

However, I remain committed to education as a practice that can form and enhance capacities for agency and reflection. Therefore, I have not wanted simply to celebrate audiences' prior competence, but to ask how it can be put to work in the classroom. Nor am I basing my claims on horror texts 'in themselves'; they remain inert before they enter discursive economies that serve to define what they are, what they mean and how they work on us. Rather, I have selectively 'read through' perspectives on popular culture in order to rethink pedagogy (cf Ellsworth 1997: 116), exploring not what we should teach students *about* horror, but what we can learn *from* it. Analyses that point to horror's self-referentiality and indebtedness to other texts, for example, led me to argue for the impossibility of originality, that our words are not our own – but that we are not therefore unable to speak, to act, to create and transform. Just as there is no foundation for a definitive, totalising reading of horror, so I have argued that we should try to live with uncertainty in the classroom and to develop pedagogies sensitive to local contexts and meanings. Horror's persistent popularity has suggested to me that we too should accommodate rather than deny our attachments and the monsters already within us. As horror emphasises the importance of feeling, I have come to value the emotional and the irrational, to recognise ambivalence, the inseparability of fear and desire, hatred and love, the demand in what seems freely given. (In this sense, at least, I believe that horror may be useful to feminist pedagogies and to women audiences). The familiarity with conventions that audiences absorb from repeated viewing, which often makes horror predictable and safe, demonstrates how understanding can derive from experience, from our belonging in the world from which horror comes, rather than critical distance alone. Yet when a film manages nonetheless to shock, move or terrify us, it reminds us of the individual and sometimes

surprising nature of our responses, dependent as they are on our partial identifications, projections, reanimation of memories thought lost. I have argued that this also shows something of why and how we learn. From the effort audiences make to perform appropriate responses to horror, to participate in the shared rituals of fear, I have come to appreciate our kinship with one another, the communities we build, temporarily, in the classroom, and the performances through which teachers and students construct their identities. I have learnt to worry less about the 'content' of horror and to consider instead its mode of address, who it invites us to be in relation to it. Those who respond to its call, who are seduced not just by its images but by the imaginings it offers, may find it motivates them also to further thought and questioning, to know and change themselves.

In the process of taking a degraded cultural form seriously in this way, I have attended more closely to the ways of knowing, thinking and understanding embedded in 'subjugated' or marginalised voices, and to the seemingly trivial or unimportant. In this context, Richard's 'mis-spelling' of Meilack as 'Melack' encapsulates better than I can the vision of an ethical pedagogy I have assembled in this thesis. There is not – and cannot be - an 'I', a conscious, controlling, rational ego at the centre of our learning. Instead, we *lack*, are unfinished and incomplete, because we do not exist before language, before the 'call of the other' that brings us into being, and because we can neither learn nor know what we know without the presence of others. At times our dependence and lack of autonomy can be frustrating and limiting, at others it can seem terrifying. But it can also be creative because it carries us forward into a future, to seeking new relations to what is left unsaid, if we care enough to search for them.

Broadly, I have argued for displacing the privilege given within education to modernist accounts of language, subjectivity and culture, in favour of those that might be called postmodern. These have formed the basis of my distinction between 'moral' and 'ethical' paradigms of media education. However, this argument evolved in the process of trying to make sense of the research experience (and my place within it). I recapitulate here why I came to think that the perspectives from which I set out were ultimately unhelpful in understanding

classroom life or meeting objectives of social justice. Since I have claimed throughout this thesis that my aim is to conduct conversations with teachers that may be useful to them, I will relate my summary to the most recent Media Studies A-Level syllabus from the Oxford, Cambridge and RSA (OCR) Examinations Board for teaching from September 2000. This remains the most popular syllabus, followed by at least four times as many students as any other. It draws on elements of what I have identified as the dominant and emergent paradigms of media education. Although I will be selective, I will show where my views can be incorporated into its assessment criteria and where they might challenge its approaches. I would emphasise that to a large extent, my research supports existing objectives and strategies in British media education, some of which have been advocated over many years. I perhaps offer a different perspective on why they might matter, and how we might achieve them.

In general, the syllabus offers a now-familiar combination of recommendations for content and concepts. Teachers can make decisions about the appropriateness of text types to the 'age and sensibilities of their candidates', but are encouraged to choose a 'wide variety of interesting and challenging texts' including 'classic, mainstream and alternative'. In relation to these, they are to focus on 'key conceptual areas' of media forms and conventions, institutions and audiences. I would see this compromise as a reasonable one. It responds to our postmodern uncertainty about 'canonical' knowledge in relation to the mass media. Flexibility as to content allows teachers to construct curricula that encompass students' specific interests, whilst providing access to a shared 'cultural capital' of 'concepts' or relationship to knowledge may help limit inequality or avoid polarisation. My concern, however, has been to reconsider what constitutes evidence of 'conceptual thinking'.

In its introductory rationale for the subject, the syllabus draws on the discourse of the dominant, modernist paradigm, which as I noted in Chapter One, tends to attribute overwhelming power to texts. Thus we find, alongside references to pleasure, enjoyment and appreciation, assertions about 'media saturation' and 'consciousness industries'. Interestingly (particularly in the light of my general arguments in this thesis about the significance of parapraxes), it misquotes a 1982 UNESCO Declaration on Media Education – where the Declaration states

that the media are 'omnipresent', it uses instead the word 'omnipotent'. It describes the media as 'agents of political and cultural influence', and suggests that teachers should question 'who is represented, by whom and for what purpose?', as if the media possess a singular intention that can be discerned 'behind' and 'beneath' the surface of representations. It refers to the 'messages, values and social signification' of texts, as if these are immanent within them, and proposes that texts be 'deconstructed' and sternly assessed for their 'realism/ truth/ accuracy', as if they are a vehicle for communicating (and potentially distorting) a reality that lies outside them. Media education provides the tools that will achieve 'knowledge and understanding', promote 'critical autonomy and independence' and is thus 'a vital form of literacy essential for modern citizenship'.

As I argued in Chapter One and elsewhere, basing calls for media education primarily on concerns about media 'influence' risks turning it into a carping enterprise, in which being critical is confounded with critique and negativity. Its logic is faulty (the media do not cause our social ills in the direct way often implied, and hence media education cannot 'cure' them), and it offers little purchase on fantasy texts that make no truth claims. It vastly overestimates what education will do and underestimates what audiences already can. In addressing young people as citizens, it demands that they are serious about the media rather than have fun with them. Media education will not deliver self-regulation, if by that is meant that it will stop young people thinking Quentin Tarantino films are 'cool', watching adult material, or forming passionate attachments to disapproved genres.

Embedded within these justifications are claims to authority – of the teacher over the student, or of specialist knowledges and value systems over ordinary, everyday ones. My empirical chapters showed that, whilst Kate and Geoff were by no means overtly authoritarian in their teaching practices, they were often pulled – albeit unwillingly – into laying down the law about what and why texts mattered or meant. They thus excluded those who disagreed, vocally or through their silence. Moreover, I noted that the requirement on them to be 'the expert' was pressurising (especially confronted with an academic researcher who

demanded evidence of what they knew) and led both to be anxious about whether they had given 'enough' or covered topics in sufficient 'depth'.

However, the syllabus also requires students to consider, in relation to all units of study, how audiences 'engage' with media languages, 'respond' to representations, and their 'plural' and 'varied' expectations, uses and interpretations of media texts 'according to their own contexts'. Whilst students may review academic research into audiences, they are also to conduct 'limited, local' research themselves and can seek 'audience feedback' on their productions. In this respect, the syllabus moves away from a textual focus towards a notion of media as resources rather than sources of domination, and culture as constituted within the practices of everyday life rather than arising from contact with texts. I have agreed with this general perspective, but have indicated reservations about how we can explore it in the classroom. In this respect, I would uphold the importance of specific and local 'investigations' into the audience. In Chapter Six I suggested that students' research in video shops was useful because it made the mediating discursive frameworks of horror consumption visible, at a remove. In Chapter Seven I also noted that the video exchange may have provided concrete evidence of audience skill in interpretation. However, questioning the diversity of responses ('do men and women read horror differently', Chapter Six), where the audience was an abstract entity assumed to exist beyond the classroom, generated essentialist models of viewing behaviour that actively silenced non-conformist practices (Mehrin, Lauren). Academic research may not necessarily be helpful here, since it has often perpetuated rather than challenged these norms. Inviting students to talk about their lived media experience produced (more or less self-mocking) fictions constructed for specific purposes, such as marking discrimination in relation to texts and maturity in relation to past selves. They revealed more about perceptions of the values of the school and the risks students were prepared to take in the classroom than 'actual' uses. The 'discursive policy' in Geoff's school in particular did not allow reflection on the pleasures afforded by 'degraded' forms within the cinema-going or video-viewing practices of students such as Chris or Saman. Moreover, the 'concept' of 'audience' was used to interrogate and limit students' practical work where teachers were ambivalent about exercising the autocratic power of 'vetoing' it for its content or effects. It may

seem a more neutral tool through which to do so, but I observed in relation to Jason (Chapter Six) that this was not necessarily how students received it.

As others have already argued, we need to consider the power relations, language games and dynamics of the classroom and how students are addressed within it. It is not a neutral space within which meanings 'in' texts can be hunted down, or experiences from outside be imported, and this challenges both text- and audience-centred pedagogies. However, I would argue that the specificity of the classroom context proves to be precisely what is most promising about it. I noted in Chapter One that 'citing' texts in different contexts may make their meanings contestable, as students read the police drama extracts against the grain encouraged by the *Critical Viewing* project. The discussion of *Nightmare on Elm Street* in Chapter Five did not so much *report* on the hybrid, processural nature of media consumption and meaning-making in everyday life, as *re-enact* it. When students talked about *Bram Stoker's Dracula* or *Jaws* in response to Kate's questions, they offered me also a way to understand the tools audiences use in negotiating their way around their media environment and thus how we might 'do' textual analysis differently. Asking students to tell us about the relational frames of reference through which they place and make sense of texts may produce insights for both teachers and students into the resources they already possess, whilst preserving the indeterminacy and context-dependence of meaning and the discontinuity of interpretation. Showing students' own representations to others in order to reflect on what they might mean may enhance students' accountability for what they have done and create a different relationship to their knowledge (a point I return to below). 'Everyday life' or 'audience-centred' pedagogies are perhaps better redefined as those that enable critical agency (speaking back, thinking or acting otherwise) within the terms available to students. If we wish to promote 'lifelong learning', we would do well to remember how a joke such as 'Edward Dildo-hands' (Chapter Three) endured over the years – perhaps keeping alive the 'theory' to which it responded that would otherwise have been forgotten. This may enable us to reconsider what constitutes a 'Key Skill' of 'Communication', which teachers are now required to assess. For instance, the syllabus suggests that the A-Level provides ample opportunities to demonstrate ability to 'contribute to a group discussion about a complex subject'. When David offered

'Russell's head' as a contribution to what we can surely agree is a complex debate about phallic symbols and power, I tried to show that what might be dismissed as a joke or disciplined as an act of insubordination proved to be both relevant and appropriate. Moreover, it sustained classroom interaction even as it subverted hierarchies of authoritative discourses.

My research also suggests how we might allow the difference and diversity on which the concept of audience insists to be heard. The issue is not so much what we ask students to speak *about*, as who we ask them to speak *as* – which in turn, I noted in relation to Lauren (Chapter Six), requires sensitivity to who they (think they) are speaking *to*. Although my evidence is limited, it would seem that in the contexts in which I was working, it was more profitable to address students as media 'producers' than as citizens or even as audiences and members of broader social categories. It opened up a forum for more diverse value judgements in Geoff's classroom, for instance, and thereby delivered the perhaps subversive suggestion that an orientation to the market and consumption rather than the school could be democratic and egalitarian. Kate, I noted as well, allowed her students to be different from her (not to 'discuss', for example), even where this required a compromise of certain principles. We might generalise to the extent of saying that young people may well respond positively to any mode of address that allows them to be something other (more) than dutiful students. It will not, however, necessarily make them more 'challenging' of institutional processes, as I observed in Chapter Six in relation to the 'market research' into audience preferences prior to the video work.

The syllabus still requires two practical productions, which constitute the full 40% of allowable assessed coursework, and in this respect differs from other existing syllabi which include only one. I have argued that practical work is important because it offers a pedagogy of pleasure that we neglect at our peril and because it values our 'imaginations'. I do not see 'imagination' as a category free from social determinations, as progressive pedagogies have too often done, but I would contrast the 'who' it allows students to be with the 'who' they must be in classroom 'discussions', which often produced foreclosure and stasis. Imagination in the space of practical work may open up alternative speaking positions and thus the unexpected, and it may do so precisely because students

do not have to take responsibility for what they say from the outset. It is also promising that the syllabus allots 50% of marks for productions to 'construction', according to clearly specified technical skills such as 'editing so that meaning is apparent to the viewer', framing and 'shooting material appropriate to the task set'. Practical work does offer a small adjustment in the power relations of education, in that it rewards literacy in forms other than traditional essays, and such criteria may focus teachers' attention on students' media competencies. They may also discourage teachers from marking down productions on the basis of distaste for their ideological 'values', impact or intention. I have suggested that doing so may reflect dominant cultural judgements and be unjust to those students whose preferences lie in the area of 'illegitimate' forms. Postmodern perspectives on our constitution within language, I argued in Chapters Five and Six, mean that teachers do not have to take on the burden of monitoring what students might have in mind. This does not mean that teachers cannot raise questions about the implications of representations, but I would propose that this is better done by establishing contexts in which students' work can be 'reflected back' to them, than by censorship in advance.

If the media are a language, then teachers need to help students speak within its forms. This does require more technical teaching (and hence more training for teachers in this area), but students may gain insights from the ad hoc improvisations of other students in presentations during the process of production. (These might be accredited under the Key Skill of 'Problem Solving'). I would also suggest that teachers may not be best placed to judge the 'appropriateness' of material, and that assessments of this should be evolved collectively, in relation to relevant target groups, as in the video exchange discussed in Chapter Seven.

I find it unfortunate, however, that the syllabus still upholds models of theory as that which enables action and language as an instrument manipulated by a prior subject, which I have argued misapprehend the purpose and the nature of practical work. The productions are primarily justified as a means by which students can put 'theory into practice' and 'draw on concepts encountered throughout the course'. The syllabus mocks students who write 'as though a famous film director had sat down with a piece by Todorov, Mulvey or Gramsci

before making their film to ensure that it conformed to the theory' – but seemingly falls into just this confusion when it comes to assessing students' films. Further, although the first year production stresses the need for students to 'use established forms and conventions', the syllabus suggests that by the second year they may also 'subvert' them, seeking – as do Davies or Masterman – signs of agency in the new and consciously oppositional. 25% of marks are allotted for 'planning'. Students are to 'originate' productions, demonstrate logic from 'planning to outcome' and describe 'how decisions affect meaning'. Teachers are to forbid productions that lack a 'clear directive' and 'clear aims in view' from the start. Assessment criteria for higher grade written work insist on an 'individual response' that is simultaneously 'freshly personal', and 'systematic', 'discriminating', has 'critical objectivity' and references 'critical theory'. Lower grades are 'more descriptive than analytical', although they must be sufficiently self-knowing to 'make their meaning clear', as if language and intention can be fully in agreement. In Chapter Six I explored how such criteria led to evaluations in which students projected themselves as singular, coherent, unified and masterful subjects, whose agency was volitional and selfhood transparent. They effectively valorised the cultural capital of middle class or more academically confident students, who were better able to articulate knowledge in such terms or prepared to position themselves as 'challenging conventions' and received ideas - even where doing so marked a lack of concern about the social consequences of representations. Moreover, they falsified the process of production in such a way that neither students nor teachers could recognise the creativity and understanding implicit in how they actually worked.

In Chapter Seven I argued that we should turn to a view of the subject as 'engaged in practices' and to knowledge 'from within' if we are to accredit the conceptual thinking that is evidenced in intelligible and appropriate actions, but that is often beyond the reach of systematic representation. In Richard's commentary (Chapter Six) I found an account of the fortuitous and purposeless way production proceeds that assessment criteria suppress, but argued that it did not result in meaningless work. Further, where practical work has often been taken as a way for students to express what they know, I argued that we should also attend to it for what it tells us of students' ignorance, what they cannot know. Lauren 'needs not to know' that women can initiate violence, since this

would put at risk other important aspects of her identity; to force her to learn this might itself constitute a violence. Ethically, we may have to allow students to work with what they have and who they are, and acknowledge how, when we act on the basis of our 'feelings', our meanings escape our control.

Therefore, although I endorse the notion that writing is a means by which students may come to understand their learning and knowledge, I would suggest that we dispense entirely with accounts of 'planning'. These assume that students use media language all along as vehicle for communicating intended meanings, whereas I have argued that in productions it is more appropriately seen as a 'prosthetic', in Shotter's terms (Chapter Seven) – something through which students achieve practical meanings. Instead, we should focus on how we can help students make the process and the product intelligible after the event. We might start by asking them to tell us *what their work is like*, not how *like our teaching* it is (an experience that is more often enraging than gratifying) – and assessment criteria do request research into 'comparable' products. We might thereby become able to value students' passions, if we can acknowledge that their 'sensibilities' might indeed include a thirst for the violent, spectacular and excessive. We can assure them that we value the re-production in their productions, and seek accountability for its sources and meanings rather than originality or subversion. We could ask for description, rather than justification, but stress that we are looking for a perspicuous account that links to the product and explains, not how they did what they intended, but how others shaped it – whether texts, technology, friends, teachers, and so on. We should focus on encouraging students to investigate how those others both constrained and enabled them, what surprises they delivered, what feedback showed them about the differences between what they thought they had said and what others did. Again, since the syllabus requests inclusion of 'audience feedback', there is space to develop such approaches. We should develop criteria for assessment based on rewarding the capacity to go beyond egotistic self-absorption and to see knowledge and meaning from a different perspective. In turn, teachers can describe students' work to them (rather than critique it), using the technological vocabulary of media 'languages and conventions' and thereby help return their implicit knowledge to them in a form in which they can take pride and for which they can be accredited. Media 'theories' may play a role in creating conditions of

possibility for translating and making connections between different forms of discourse, but we should not reward their inclusion alone. The kind of writing I am seeking from students I have tried to enact in this thesis. That is, I have offered descriptions and narratives, in which theoretical perspectives have led me to select some details rather than others to sustain my arguments. Theory has thus informed my writing, but it has not done so in a systematic way, and nor has it delivered certitude or conclusive interpretations. It has enabled me to interrogate my data from different vantage points and to point to areas of uncertainty and future questions, as I argued the encounter with the 'real' audience did for some of Kate's students.

My analysis of Richard's commentary 'before and after' the teaching shows that we should not expect instant transformations; this is not a fairy story where the wave of a magic wand will enable Cinderella to go to the ball, but an everyday one of slow struggles and small changes. These proposals are also limited. I have discussed primarily how we may enable students to view their work differently and how we may understand their difference from us. I have focused on Kate's students because their cultural competence is insufficiently valued within education and their voices often silenced within public debates about 'violent' or mainstream media. I have not explored how power relations within group production work might be negotiated. Nor have I offered a means by which students might understand for themselves how their identities and tastes are produced through differentiation from (degraded) others and the dominating effects of these when they are reinforced by powerful assumptions about what is legitimate and valuable. As I noted in Chapter Four, some students may derive greater educational benefit or status from their cultural judgements than others, yet the passion with which they deliver them has made me chary of requesting that they submit them to reasoned debate.

My research also has consequences for how teachers might see themselves and their work. I reject claims that teachers alone can provide the tools that will empower students or are responsible for the development of each individual in their charge. There will always be a role for the conceptual or specialist discourse they offer, but perhaps a more modest one, in which they ask students whether it enabled them to place what they know, without expecting that they will

invariably get it right. They may in some respects (judging what a text means or what is appropriate, for example) have less to offer than students' peers, since they do not necessarily inhabit the same world. Far from deprofessionalising teachers, however, I would argue that this view reinforces the value of their pragmatic and routine achievements. Teachers are one important part of a learning environment, providing a resource for students to think about themselves with. They can motivate reflection, through their participation in the learning process, by the relations they bring into being through their pedagogical address. Since their exercise of power and authority is both inevitable and productive, they might focus on how rather than whether to do it, on how they can be curious about what students know in order to develop ways of working that help them make it meaningful and useful.

Teachers also need to acknowledge their own implication in the relations of the classroom, what they seek and desire, how they are shaped by forces beyond their control, including those that lead to oppression and discrimination. They too are subjects engaged in practices, whose understanding and skills far surpass what they consciously know. They need to demand for themselves what I hold they should also construct for students – space to puzzle over what is problematic, which produces unexpected reactions in them, to develop a reflective and accountable practice. I would acknowledge that this will not happen without a material commitment at local, regional and national levels to allot resources to it.

I would stress, therefore, that my suggestions are not handy strategies that dictate solutions or ensure success. They sketch out how we might conceive pedagogy differently, beyond fantasies of full understanding and certain consequences, and think through instead both our togetherness and our difference. There will be no end point at which our learning is complete, and this is just as it should be, for the more exciting question is not what we should do, but as Wittgenstein says, 'how we can go on together'.

Appendix I: Transcription Conventions

( )	Undecipherable words or phrases
(?)	Approximate transcription
(...)	Words omitted
(e.g.: laughs)	Contextual or non-verbal information, or brief summary of omitted text
/	Pause of less than two seconds
//	Pause of more than two seconds
	Conventional punctuation marks are used to indicate ends of utterances or sentences, usually indicated by slight pauses on the audiotape.
CAPITALS	Indicates emphasis with increased volume
Bold	Indicates stressed words
((	Simultaneous speech
-	Indicates interrupted utterances
::	Indicates where the previous syllable in a word was elongated

(Adapted from Dyson 1997: 189)

Appendix II: Composition of the student groups

Geoff's school

In the first phase of the research, I observed two classes. One had eight male and five female students. According to their own self-definitions of ethnic identity, of the men three were Indian British, one white British, one Indian, one Asian-British, one South African-British and one Greek Cypriot. Of the women, three were white British, one Asian British and one South American British. The second group consisted of six males (one white British, two British Asian, two Indian, one Bangladeshi) and nine females (three white British, two Indian, one Pakistani, one Bangladeshi, one British Asian and one Asian).

In the second phase, I observed one group of twelve students, with equal numbers of males and female. Of the females, three were white (but did not specify this on their questionnaires), one British Asian (Pakistani), one Asian, one Indian-British. Of the males, one was Greek British, one Indian, one Pakistani, one British Bengali, one British Indian, and one white (although the latter, similarly, left the ethnic identity question blank). All students were in the first year and third term of their A-Level course (Year 12) and sixteen or seventeen years old.

Kate's school

In the first phase of the study, there were seventeen males to nine females, with one (self-defined) mixed race and one Pakistani female student, one Bengali male student (who joined the course late and left early), the rest white. Two teachers (Kate and 'Miss Hobbs') taught the class, sharing two of four classes in the week.

In the second phase, there were eleven females and four males, two black British female students and one black male student, the rest white. Kate taught this smaller class alone. Although I refer to the students as 'working class', Kate noted on several occasions that they defined themselves as middle class. Again, all students were in Year 12, at the start of their A-Level course. Most were sixteen years old.

APPENDIX III: films referred to in the thesis

Title	Date of Release	Director
American Werewolf In London	1981	John Landis
Angel Heart	1987	Alan Parker
Basic Instinct	1992	Paul Verhoeven
Blacula	1972	William Crain
Blair Witch Project	1999	Eduardo Sanchez / Daniel Myrick
Bram Stoker's Dracula	1992	Francis Ford Coppola
Cabinet of Doctor Caligari, The*	1919	Robert Wiene
Candyman	1992	Bernard Rose
Child's Play 3	1991	Jack Bender
Clueless	1995	Amy Heckerling
Creature from the Black Lagoon	1954	Jack Arnold
Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde	1931	Rouben Mamoulian
Dracula	1931	Tod Browning
Dracula Prince of Darkness	1965	Terence Fisher
Edward Scissorhands	1990	Tim Burton
Evil Dead II	1987	Sam Raimi
Frankenstein	1931	James Whale
Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare	1991	Rachel Talalay
Friday the 13th	1980	Sean S. Cunningham
From Dusk Till Dawn	1995	Roberto Rodriguez
Goodfellas	1990	Martin Scorsese
Halloween	1978	John Carpenter
Henry Portrait of a Serial Killer	1987	John Naughton
House Party	1990	Reginald Hudlin
Hunger, The	1993	Tony Scott
Jaws	1975	Steven Spielberg
Judge Dredd: The Movie	1995	Danny Cannon
King Kong	1933	Merian C. Cooper
Last Gasp	1995	Scott McGinnis
Lost Boys, The	1987	Joel Schumacher
Mary Shelley's Frankenstein	1994	Kenneth Branagh
Metropolis	1927	Fritz Lang
Night of the Living Dead	1968	George Romero
Nightmare on Elm Street	1984	Wes Craven
Nosferatu *	1921	Friedrich Murnau
Peeping Tom +	1960	Michael Powell
Poltergeist	1982	Tobe Hooper
Psycho	1960	Alfred Hitchcock
Pulp Fiction	1994	Quentin Tarantino
Rabid Grannies |	1989	Emmanuel Kervyn
Reservoir Dogs	1992	Quentin Tarantino
Rocky	1976	John G. Avildsen
Scream	1996	Wes Craven
Seven	1995	David Fincher
Silence of the Lambs	1991	Jonathan Demme
Stephen King's It	1990	Tommy Lee Wallace
Texas Chainsaw Massacre	1974	Tobe Hooper

The Thing	1982	John Carpenter
The Thing from Another World	1951	Howard Hawks
Thelma and Louise	1991	Ridley Scott
To Wong Foo	1995	Beeban Kidron
Video Dead, The	1987	Robert Scott
Waiting to Exhale	1995	Forest Whitaker
Witness	1985	Peter Weir

* Germany
+ UK
| Belgium
All others made in USA

Appendix IV: Detailed account of the video exchange

I spent three hours with two student groups, showing all Kate's students' videos. I taped their discussions and transcribed them, and gave each of Kate's students a copy of the sections relevant to their work the following week, along with a general summary of themes that emerged on a handout that I talked through in a lesson. I also screened the Sussex students' videos and similarly transcribed comments, although I was unable to feed them back in person.

The time to transcribe the tapes was only available to me as a full-time researcher, and although Kate's students had devised questionnaires, written responses were less informative and frequently incomplete. The Sussex students were initially dismissive and only became less so when I reminded them that this was an exchange and their own work would also be evaluated. I also carefully mediated the feedback so that every student could 'hear' something reasonably positive about their work, even where this involved some white lies on my part. The direct 'presence' of the audience might have been more problematic for both (as Buckingham and Sefton-Green convey clearly in their account of the focus groups (Buckingham and Sefton-Green 1994)).

Such exchanges may only work with productions that provide pleasures to participants in the moment – that is, video rather than essays or print productions. Even with students studying the same topic, they may reinforce inequalities. The Sussex students, for instance, had different resources available to them. They were in the second year of their course, were working in groups and were using moving images rather than still, which may have made their work seem immediately superior to both sides.

I do not think it necessarily contributed to students' capacity to locate themselves within broad social categories. It seemed 'obvious' to me, for example, that the Sussex students had chosen to make films within 'prestigious' horror subgenres, such as the occult and the thriller, whereas Kate's students opted for slashers. I thought that this might reflect both their different class location and local knowledges and interests (since inland Sussex is said to be a notorious centre of black magic), but my questions about it produced blank looks.

On the whole students were receptive to the feedback, although this was partly a consequence of how I monitored it. Only Antony struggled to reassert himself in the face of negative responses: 'It was said that my film had no storyline, but it does to a certain extent, it is slow moving and very basic, but who says that storylines have to be complex? Is it that my film never had a storyline or was it that the audience couldn't follow it?' I believe the feedback he received may well have been justified, in that he produced very few images and opted instead for a large amount of script that 'explained' the story in the first frames. However, he may have been drawing on other genres with which he was more familiar (such as, computer games and manga comics).

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